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Issue #229 November 2022

TheVillage

NEWS & FEATURES from Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Blackwell, Burcot Beoley, Cofton Hackett, Finstall, Hopwood, Bordesley, Rowney Green, Lickey, Lickey End, Marlbrook, The Oakalls & everywhere in between!

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TheVillage Issue 229 November 2022

inside

Bringing you village life for 24 years

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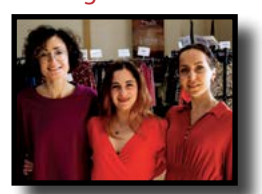

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Cover: *The Angel of Love*, at St Laurence Church, Alvechurch. Read more on p16-17

Alvechurch Parish at Christmas

Christmas light switch-on
Saturday 3 December
Alvechurch Village Square
from 4pm

Tree switch-on at 5pm
Father Christmas • Town Crier
• Crown Meadow Choir •
• Alvechurch Community Choir •
• Nativity activities at the Baptist Church from 5pm •
and much more...

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CHRISTMAS DAY MENU

MERRY CHRISTMAS

1st Sitting: between 12noon ~ 3pm
2nd Sitting: between 3pm ~ 6pm

MEAL ONE

Prawn Cocktail
or
Chicken or Vegetable Soup
with Bread Rolls

Roast Turkey with Stuffing
Chipolata Sausages,
Roast Potatoes,
Boiled Potatoes, Sprouts,
Baby Carrots & Peas
Apple & Cranberry Sauce

Luxury Christmas pudding
with Custard Cream
or
Coffee

MEAL TWO

Onion Bhajee
or
Mixed Kebab

Kurzi Lamb *or* Chicken
Served with Special
Rice & Masala Sauce *or*
Vegetable Curry

Gulab Jam
or
Coffee

MEAL THREE

Soup
or
Chicken Pakora

Chicken Tikka Masalla
or
Tandoori Chicken
Shaslick Bhuna
(off the bone)
Both served with
Aloo Gobi &
Special Rice *or* Nan

Gulab Jam
or
Coffee

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FA Cup First Round Draw
Cheltenham Town v Alvechurch

ALVECHURCH FC players and supporters (above, right) cheer to the TV cameras as their ball is picked out during the FA Cup first round draw screened live by the BBC from the club's ground .

Guests of honour Alan "Smudger" Smith, the England and Arsenal star who began his career at "The Church", and former Aston Villa and England footballer Dion Dublin performed the draw at Alvechurch FC's Lye Meadow clubhouse. The event was set up after the team overcame Worksop Town 3-2 two days earlier to be the lowest ranked team to make the FA Cup first rounder "proper", adding to the romance of the competition. It is the first time Alvechurch has got this far since 1974.

As the tension grew, and with only three balls left to be drawn, Dion pulled out number 59, Alvechurch, to face League 1 side Cheltenham on November 5. FA Fireworks: *Pages 54-55*

Station lifts stuck

Hopes that a village rail station was at last to get the long-promised lifts to make its platforms accessible to all have been dashed for now by the Government mayhem in Westminster.

Barnt Green Parish Council had been hoping to confirm that work would begin early next year to install the lifts, missed from the initial upgrade of the station in 2015, and then by Network Rail by the end of 2017.

Parish council chairman Robert Cholmondeley told fellow councillors at their October meeting: "So, the lifts, it seems, now need Ministerial approval, which I find amazing.

"We will probably have another Transport Minister in two weeks," he added at the meeting, held three days before the then latest Prime Minister, Liz Truss, resigned.

BARNT GREEN Parish Council's application to register a village field (left) popularly used for tobogganing as a village green has been objected to by the owner of the land, councillors heard. They now fear the application could "take for ever".

The lifts were a legal requirement, he added, "which should have been done back in 2015 as part of equality legislation".

Barnt Green was now left with "an unknown date" for when the Minister's approval will be given.

The council had believed the Department of Transport had at last granted approval and that Network Rail was scheduling contractors to start work in early 2023.

The latest setback will come as another blow to disabled station users who have faced the prospect of only being able to catch the train in one direction. Some wanting to travel to Redditch, for example, have resorted to catching the train to Longbridge where they are able to change trains and come back on one going in the right direction.

"For disabled people, it is terrible," Coun Cholmondeley has said.

Parish goes on a pub tour

A PARISH council is organising a tour of drinking establishments to spread the word of what it is all about.

"As much as we want the public to come to see us, we need to make ourselves available to the public," Alvechurch parish chairman Marc Worrall told colleagues.

He suggested the best way to reach people was to hold surgeries in places where villagers socialise: The Goat & Trousers in Rowney Green, The Red Lion in Alvechurch village, the Hopwood Inn and Meadow Farm in Bordesley.

"We can make it from 7-8pm and at least if no one comes along, whoever is there can have a drink," said Coun Worrall.

"It is to show ourselves and that the parish council exists not just here in Hopwood and it is an opportunity to try to get redress, to come forward and have a moan and groan or question us about what we are doing."

The first session will be in Rowney Green at a date to be announced.

Gravel pit sale

ALVECHURCH Parish Council has agreed to sell a piece of land in Rowney Green, subject to it being opened to the public three times a year.

The gravel pit woodland, in Gravel Pit Lane, was put up for sale when a villager asked the council if her family could buy it because it had long played a part in their lives and she wished to protect it.

The council decided if it was to sell the land, it should be on the open market and subsequently received three bids, of £13,500, £20,357 and £22,653.

In a council session closed to the press and public, voting was split 4-4 between the two higher bids and the chairman Marc Worrall used his casting vote in favour of the higher bid for £22,653. The sale is subject to the inclusion of a clause mirroring the bidder's promise for the area to be retained as it is, increasing biodiversity and opening the area three times a year to the public in line with guidance received from The Wildlife Trust.

The council declined to reveal the identity of the successful bidder.

In earlier council meetings, it was hoped the money raised from the sale might go towards finding a new site for the Alvechurch allotments if the current lease on that land could not be renewed.

REMEMBRANCE SERVICES SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13

ALVECHURCH is combining its remembrance commemorations with a service on Remembrance Sunday organised by St Laurence Church, Alvechurch Parish Council and the Alvechurch Services Association.

It will be held in St Laurence Church at 10am on November 13 and at the Memorial Green from 10.30am. Bear Hill will be closed to traffic up to Snake Lane between 10.15am and 11.30am.

In Blackwell, there is a service at 9am at St Catherine's Church Blackwell, which includes an Act of Remembrance at the Blackwell War Memorial.

At Holy Trinity, Lickey, there is a Remembrance Service for All Ages from 10am-10.45 moving to Lickey War Memorial for an Act of Remembrance, ending with the silence at 11am.

At St Andrew's, Barnt Green, there is a Remembrance Service at 10am at the church moving outside to the War Memorial.

At Beoley, St Leonard's Remembrance Day service is at 10.30am beginning in the church.

Low-speed fibre

BROADBAND installers have written to Alvechurch Parish Council saying that the fibre-optic upgrade, already completed around part of the area, will be "rolled out to Nos 22-48 Blythesway in quarter 4 of 2028-29".

Chairman Marc Worrall said: "I think we should write to ask for an explanation of how this has been started in Blythesway and Hinton Avenue and now it has been put back to 2029."

Larder 'need'

ORGANISERS of a planned Alvechurch Larder believe there will be a growing need for it to help people in the parish.

One of the scheme's steering group members, Dave Shoesmith, told parish councillors: "Is there a demand? We don't know.

"All we know is that from the schools there is thought to be a demand from some families.

"We need ten people for it to work and I think we will get more than ten people. We have been to the Alcester one and the Pershore one and they are now running seven days a week and there are queues outside."

Speed alarm

PARISH councillors were surprised to hear from community police officers that speed surveys in Hopwood and Weatheroak Hill had picked up only one car breaking the limit over both locations.

Parish chairman Marc Worrall said: "This doesn't reflect what is generally believed to be the case. It is great you have produced these figures, but they are alarming to us because we don't think they reflect the situation."

District councillor Charlie Hotham said: "May I suggest you get some data cables put down at Hopwood and Weatheroak. That will give you the data.

"You can then use that to put pressure on the police. They are saying there is no speeding at Hopwood, but if you can show some hard facts that there is speeding, it will help," added Coun Hotham.

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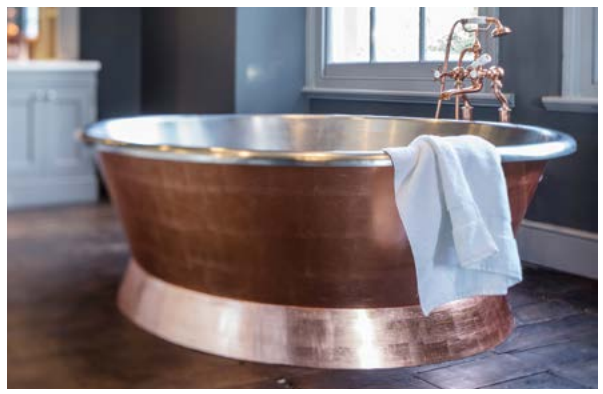

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SCARECROWS, THEY'RE OUT-STANDING!

FOR the third year, the streets of Alvechurch have been scattered with monsters, characters and celebrities all crafted out of straw and hay for Alvechurch Scarecrow Festival.

Running over October half term week, the festival was kicking off just as *The Village* went to press, and families, nursery groups and clusters of scarecrow-spotters were already out and about hunting down the best creations.

The wet weather had dampened some of the scarecrows and not as many were yet lining the streets, possibly due to fear of another downpour.

However the competition was heating up, with fantastic creations to fill twelve categories including Best Scarecrow designed by a child, the family favourite, biggest scarecrow and of course; best overall scarecrow.

The money raised by the festival, through scarecrow entries and the cost of maps will go towards The Lounge to support the work they do for the local community.

You can check Facebook for more information including the announcement of the winners: facebook.com/alvechurchscarecrowfestival

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GOOD TIMES AT THE GARRITY

It's been a whirlwind six months of raising the bar in Barnt Green
and the team are only just getting warmed up!

LAUNCHED in April 2022, owners Gary, Suze, Al and Jules, along with an amazing team of innovative, experienced bar staff and baristas, have so far fulfilled their dream of creating a café bar in Barnt Green bringing people together, while providing an enviable platform for their beer brand, Gypsy Brew, to work its magic and shine.

They are unwaveringly dedicated to remaining small with a passion for quality and a team of fantastic people who can help to realise the potential of their Brummie Beers, along with the quality day time brunches and a taste of the City with 200 Degrees Coffee and Bird and Blend Tea.

Beer and cheer: The Garrity at 18-20 Hewell Road, Barnt Green B45 8NE.

What have they got planned?

The World Cup

Not only are they increasing their beer offering in the coming weeks, The Garrity will also be showing all the England and Wales matches – and some of the finals – throughout November and December, with opening hours adjusted accordingly. To keep up to date, see their social channels or contact details at the bottom of this article.

Christmas

The Garrity will operate normal hours until Christmas Eve when they will be open till late and for a short time on Christmas Day for drinks, mulled wine and mince pies. So if you're looking to get out of the house for a breath of fresh air, be sure to pay them a visit.

New Year's Eve

If you fancy something a little different from the norm, see in the New Year with The Garrity from 7pm. Tickets will be on sale from Tuesday 15th November and are just £20. You'll receive a Welcome Drink and canapés on arrival.

Private Hire

Are you planning an event? The Garrity has catered for a number of private hires since opening and always receive excellent feedback on their dedicated service and intimate atmosphere. With 44 covers available, why not get in touch?

Life's too short to be too serious. The Garrity is here for the good times!

Christmas and New Year hours
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Boxing Day: Closed
Normal Opening Hours Resume until New Year's Eve:
New Years Eve: 8.30am - 1am
New Years Day: 11am - 4pm

For more information visit: thegarrity.co.uk | instagram.com/thegarritybarntgreen
facebook.com/thegarritybarntgreen | **email** contact@thegarrity.co.uk

Cofton Hackett Parish Council
News: Autumn 2022

Cofton Hackett Parish Council has been very busy over the summer months attending to a number of issues relating to the Parish and through this page in *The Village* we wanted to bring you up to date on what has been happening. There has been some comment over recent weeks on the condition of our roads and footways and you will find in this article full details of what the Council has been doing to address these concerns.

Looking forward there will be local Parish Council elections next May and it would be good to see some new faces coming forward to join Cofton Hackett Parish Council so that we fully represent the views and concerns of our residents. If you are interested in finding out more about the Parish Council's work and how you might be able to contribute to this, please contact our clerk Andrew Billau or talk to one of your Councillors for more information.

On a personal basis I have decided to stand down from the Council next May after 11 years as a Councillor, the last five of these as your chairman. I have found it an interesting and rewarding experience during which we have seen many significant changes in the Parish. This will mean there will be at least one vacancy on the Council next year so please get in touch if you are interested in standing. We can promise you an exciting and fulfilling few years.

Cllr Roger Westbury, Chairman

Bus Shelter, Groveley Lane

In July, one of the bus shelters in Groveley Lane was hit by a vehicle and completely demolished. Fortunately, no one was hurt in the incident. The Parish Council owns the bus shelters on that stretch of road and we are working with our insurers on recovery of costs from the third party.

The site was cleared of debris in August and temporary barriers put in place. There has been some delay in providing a replacement shelter due to insurance protocols, including the need to provide several quotes for rebuilding to the insurance company. It has proven difficult to find building contractors with capacity to take on this work in the current climate.

The Council is also considering, in conjunction with Transport for West Midlands, whether to install a brick-built shelter, a modern prefabricated shelter, or maybe just a standalone bus-stop post. We will ensure the situation is resolved as soon as possible.

Rose Hill / Lickey Road Traffic Island

In the last month, there have been two separate traffic incidents at the Rose Hill Island site, with cars leaving the road and damaging railings surrounding the island. There was a similar incident in September last year. The railings are owned by the Parish Council and need to be repaired by us. For both of these recent incidents we have been able to obtain details of the vehicle and driver responsible and will be pursuing recovery of costs through third party insurers. Please bear with us whilst we have replacement railings made.

The vegetation on the centre of the island is again very overgrown, we will be employing contractors to prune vegetation and cut back the trees there in November.

Traffic Safety on our Major Roads

The traffic incidents highlighted in this article help to demonstrate that we continue to have an issue with traffic safety and excessive speeds on our major roads, particularly Barnt Green Road and Groveley Lane. Councillors and residents regularly raise the problem with our County Councillor and Worcestershire Highways but little has been done to try to address the problem. The Parish Council is proposing to hold a public meeting, to include our County Councillor and hopefully the Police and Crime Commissioner, early in the new year. We will let everyone know when this meeting is being held as we would welcome your support by attending the meeting and raising your concerns.

Street Lighting

We are continuing with our policy of replacing our older, sodium type lamps, as and when they fail, with LED lamps. Out of our stock of 71 street lights on our side streets, 34 have now been converted to LED.

Notice of Conclusion of Audit for Financial Year 2021-22

The Parish Council has received the external auditor's report following inspection of its finances and accounts for the financial year ended 31st March 2022. The auditor concluded that the accounts 'are in accordance with proper practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met'.

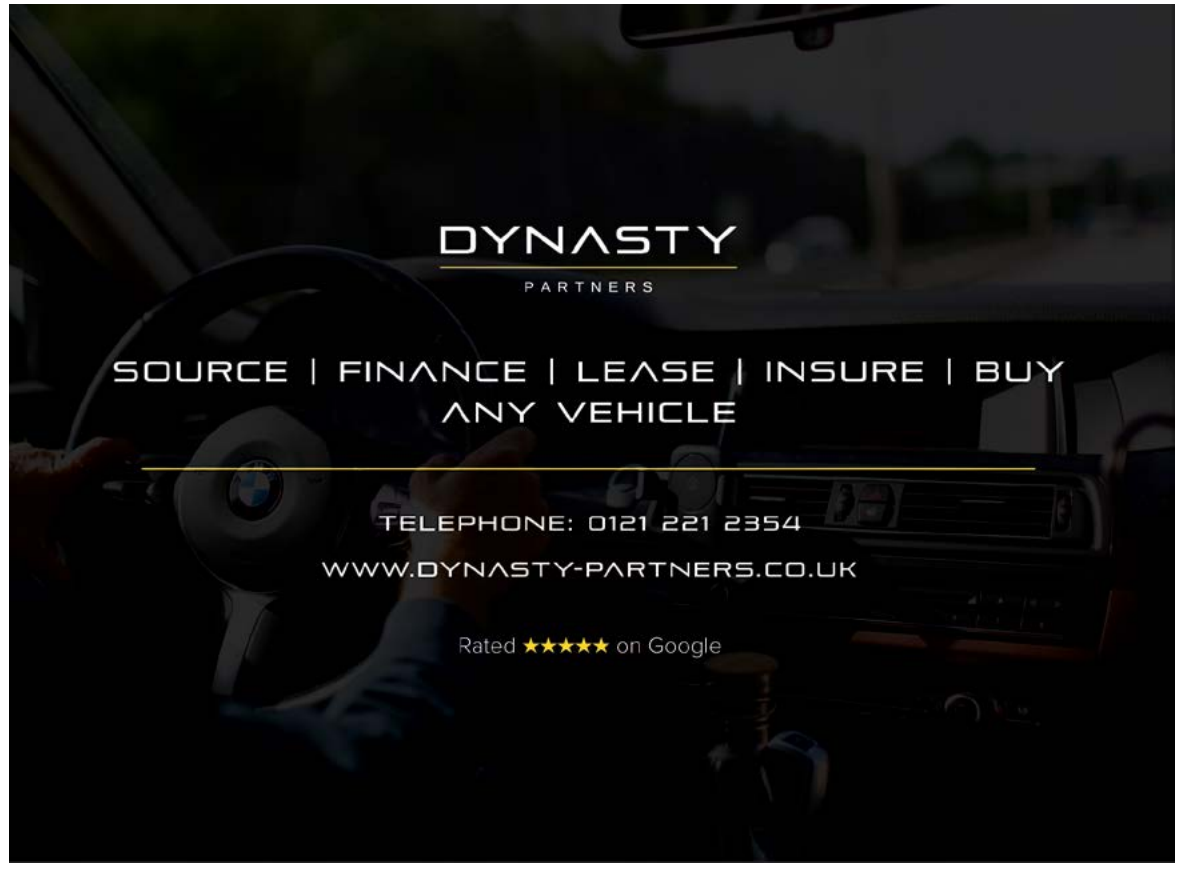
Members of the public are entitled to inspect the accounting records for a period following the conclusion, on payment of a small fee. If you do wish to inspect the Council's accounts, please contact the Clerk to arrange an appointment.

The Parish Council meets on the third Monday of every month (excluding August) at the New Village Hall. Members of the public are welcome to attend all meetings to raise any important issues or just to see what's happening in the Parish.

Contact the Clerk

Email: clerk@coftonhackettpc.org
Telephone: 07496 979153

Any views and opinions on this page are those of Cofton Hackett Parish Council.



WASSAILING INTO 2023

AS winter drags on and the festivities of Christmas and New Year are over, it can seem a long time until spring returns. One thing to look forward to is the traditional Wassail celebration which will be held on Saturday 4th February 2023 in Alvechurch, hosted by Ælfgythe Border Morris, *writes Pam Morley, Squire of Ælfgythe.*

There are different forms of Wassail. One tradition was to fill a large bowl with ale and go round the village singing Wassail carols outside each house. The householder would then give the Wassailers some money or cakes and everyone would have a tot of the ale. No doubt the singing got a little more 'ragged' as the evening progressed, but it was a chance to get together for fun. This is thought to be the origin of carol singing that takes place at Christmas.

Another form of Wassail is the midwinter festival where villagers would get together to sing and dance in an orchard. This was a much noisier affair as there was a belief that it was necessary to "wake up" the trees from their winter slumber and to scare away evil spirits that might blight the future crop of apples, pears, etc. This is the type of Wassail that Ælfgythe will be holding.

Our Wassail is becoming more popular each year, and it is wonderful to see the community coming out to support us in both the procession through the village and the actual Wassail itself. We will start the evening at approximately 4.30pm at The Crown Inn, Withybed Lane with four Morris sides dancing. Then at 6.30pm we will form up into a procession and walk through the village to The Weighbridge pub for the Wassail ceremony. It is traditional to shout "Waes Hael" (live well) while processing, and the expected response is "Drink Hael" or drink well.

This year we will be joined by the Alvechurch Community Choir who will sing traditional Wassail carols to open and close the festivities, our very own "Green Man" who will act as Master of Ceremonies and Colonel Pickering's Regiment Musketeers from the Sealed Knot to make some very impressive noise as they fire their muskets!

This year we want to include children and young people from the village more, and so we plan to resurrect another aspect of Wassail – the King and Queen of the orchard. Traditionally, a boy and girl would be chosen to be the King and Queen and their role would be to lead the hanging of toast in the branches of the trees.

So, with the kind assistance of The Lounge in the Village Square, we are running an art competition to choose our Kings and Queens, and we are giving them the title of "Royal Guardians of the Orchard".

There will be two categories, 6 to 10 year olds and 11 to 15 year olds, and to enter the competition the children should draw a picture of a tree. It can be a winter scene, a tree in summer or autumn and paint, pencils or felt tip pens are acceptable. The picture should be drawn on an A4 piece of paper and handed in at The Lounge. Please make sure the artist's name, age and contact number is written on the back of the picture. Everyone who enters the competition will get a certificate, and the two

winners from each category will win a £10 book token.

The winners will be announced prior to the Wassail. We would like all the entrants to be at the head of the procession, and to help with hanging the toast. Please note, all children must be accompanied by a responsible adult throughout the Wassail. The competition will run throughout November and December and members of Ælfgythe will decide the winners in January.

So, get the children drawing their pictures, and please come along to join in the fun. You can help us make lots of noise using a drum, whistles or even banging an old saucepan! We would love to see you on 4th February. Waes Hael to you all!

Waes Hael!: Villagers process through Alvechurch, singing and celebrating.
Pictures/ Mark Easter

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The Rose & Daisy Foundation

GUARDIAN ANGEL KEEPS WATCH OVER CHILDREN

WHEN you enter the churchyard of St Laurence in Alvechurch from the top of School Lane, until recently if you looked to your right, in the corner was a slightly overgrown area which you may not have taken much notice of before.

St Laurence recently contacted *The Village* to discuss the current work taking place in this area. They revealed that this quiet area of the churchyard is home to an unknown number of small graves belonging to babies who were stillborn or died shortly after being born. The graves date back to before the days of proper burials for babies who died very young, and many are unmarked.

The Rev Gail Rogers reflected on the "forgotten children" buried here, and how some mothers may have laid their children to rest under the cover of darkness, to avoid being noticed. Sadly, negative stigma shrouded mothers whose children were lost to neonatal death or were stillborn. This stigma may have pushed parents to bury their children in secret, at night in the corner of the churchyard. It might only be these parents who knew that their children were buried here.

During a short service, Gail said that there are likely to be babies buried unofficially within existing graves by parents, as the thought of their child being buried alongside someone, especially within the grave of another mother, may have brought them some comfort.

It's not known how many babies and children have been buried in this corner of the churchyard. There are a few small graves with memorial stones, however the true number is likely to be much higher than the number recorded. But St Laurence is now ensuring that these forgotten children are remembered.

The church, and in particular the churchwardens, including Mick Fletcher and Graham Clark, have long been considering how to effectively commemorate the babies buried there, as many of the graves do not have memorials.

Together: Artist Andy De Comyn, pictured right, with the Rev Gail Rogers and Mick Fletcher at the unveiling of the carving.

Graham Clark said: "This aberration has long been a source of sorrow for members of St Laurence and this year we have been able to do something about it. An ongoing project has been started to go some way to right the wrong of the past."

A cherry tree just off the path through the churchyard was damaged during a storm, but the stump was preserved for a potential future project. When the area began to be cleared, an idea developed that the stump could be used for a memorial sculpture.

ST Laurence contacted Andy DeComyn, a public artist who has worked on projects locally, including the memorial sculpture *Fin's Place* for Finlay Church by the stream in The Meadows, and the serpent and the apple, carved from a fallen tree at the top of the Meadows, which was unveiled in 2014. Andy was commissioned to carve a sculpture from the cherry tree stump.

Hard at work: Andy in the process of carving the angel. *Image by Graham Clark*

On inspection of the large stump, Andy suggested that it could be carved into an angel, with two of the large branches towards the back of the stump chiselled into wings.

The angel took around five days for Andy to complete. He said that the cherry wood should be more hard-wearing than the serpent and apple in the Meadows, which was carved from a large black poplar tree which was thought to be around 170 years old when it fell. That has, over time and possibly after much fun climbing on it by village children, begun to crumble.

The Angel of Love was unveiled on Sunday 9 October following a special service at the church to commemorate and support Baby Loss Awareness Week (9-15 October 2022). It now stands watch over the graves of the children buried at St Laurence. A memorial plaque has been erected next to the angel and a memorial stone donated by A Pullen's Memorials will be placed on the burial site.

At the time *The Village* went to press, the corner of the churchyard was in the process of being cleared and tidied to provide a proper memorial and place to remember the babies and children buried there.

It is an ongoing project for the church which hopes to make it a more open and tidy spot, made possible by donations from the church and local community.

Before and After: The Angel of Love takes shape from the stump of a cherry tree damaged by a storm. '*Before' image taken by Graham Clark*

The serpent and the apple: carved from a fallen black poplar tree, Andy carving the apple in 2014 (right).

■ To find out more about Baby Loss Awareness week or information on how to support the cause, visit:

www.tommys.org
www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk
www.babyloss-awareness.org

75 years of sport on air

BROMSGROVE author Patrick Murphy has just published his 44th sports book in 40 years, and this one is special to him.

Murphy (pictured right), a BBC sports reporter for Radio 5 Live, is the longest-serving broadcaster on the flagship programme *Sports Report*, broadcast every Saturday afternoon on 5 Live. It's the longest-running sports show on radio in the world, celebrating its 75th birthday next January. Murphy felt it was high time the programme was celebrated and set to work on it at the start of lock-down, in April 2020.

"The show started when Clement Atlee was Prime Minister and King Charles wasn't even born. I set out to chronicle the social changes in the UK – from rationing to Covid – as well as how sport has changed drastically," he told *The Village*.

Murphy first broadcast on *Sports Report* in 1981, when he moved to this area. "Of all the reporting I've done with the BBC since 1974, this is the show I treasure being part of. So I interviewed 165 past and present colleagues, fans of the show from the sporting and entertainment world and listeners to whom *Sports Report* is part of the fabric of their Saturdays. I ended up with 125,000 words but it could easily have been 200,000!"

Murphy has co-written books with the likes of Bob Willis, Graham Gooch, Basil D'Oliveira, Imran Khan, Viv Richards and Alec Stewart as well as producing biographies of Ian Botham and Brian Clough – but, he adds, "this latest one is a real labour of love."

***BBC SPORTS REPORT - A Celebration of the World's Longest-Running Sports Programme* is published by Bloomsbury.**

Supporting refugees in style

BROMSGROVE and Redditch Welcome Refugees (BRWR) hosted a charity catwalk fundraiser to support local refugee families.

BRWR provides practical and financial aid to families from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine living in Bromsgrove and Redditch to help them to create new lives after leaving their war-torn home countries.

A total of 140 people attended the fashion show, where women's outfits from high street retailers were modelled by seven volunteers and were sold at discounts of up to 75 percent.

Yevgenia, from Kyiv, was one of three Ukrainian refugees who modelled the clothes said she enjoyed modelling the outfits: "I was very comfortable. All people were friendly and very kind. I am happy for this support. I had good emotions and did it with pleasure."

BRWR Chair Yvonne Rendell was pleased with how the show went and praised the support they had received, she said: "It went very well indeed. A lot of people were happy to come along, enjoy themselves, do something a little bit different and also help us continue the important work we do supporting our refugees. We're very grateful to all the models who took part, especially our three Ukrainian models. Thanks also to everyone who organised and supported the event."

The fashion show, which was held at Bromsgrove Methodist Church, provided free of charge for the event, raised more than £1,200 for a twin-town support group.

■ **Donations to BRWR can be made at https://bwr.uk**

Yevgenia, Viktoriia and Tetiana: the trio of Redditch Ukrainian refugees on the catwalk.

Striking a pose: The show in full swing.

Fun at the fair: The Mop fair visits Alvechurch in October 2022. *Picture*/Keith Woolford

The Lounge Lock Challenge

EIGHT village youngsters put their muscles to the test recently when they took part in The Lounge Lock Challenge to raise money for children in Ukraine.

The group, along with the youth leader and volunteers from Youth @ The Lounge, Alvechurch took on the longest flight of locks in the UK.

The challenge, which they completed on 25 September, started at Bottom Lock by the Queen's Head pub in Stoke Prior and stretched over 2.25 miles to Top Lock at Tardebigge.

The group worked together to drain the locks and open and shut them safely, all the time demonstrating exceptional teamwork and unwavering enthusiasm.

Each of the team took it in turns to steer the community boat *Cecelia* back into Alvechurch Marina.

The group raised a total of £325 in sponsorship, which will be donated to Save The Children's Emergency Fund to support children in Ukraine.

The trip was run in association with Worcester, Birmingham and Droitwich Canal Society, which provided volunteer helmsmen, lock keepers and tea makers throughout the day.

Challenge complete!: The team at Top Lock in Tardebigge after 2.25miles.

A step back in time

THE village group for seniors, *Friendship Matters,* is run weekly by The Lounge Community Cafe with activities, games, seated exercise and subsidised hot meals and drinks to help reduce loneliness, isolation and keep active in both body and mind.

On 30 September, a group of seniors took a day trip to the Black Country Living Museum. The group of 26 plus staff and volunteers from The Lounge enjoyed a day exploring the museum.

While visiting the old garage, the group was informed that Dellow Car Factory used to be based in Alvechurch and now has a close named after it, which many villagers are sure to recognise.

After two years of being isolated at home by the pandemic, and not having as much access to social events or opportunities to get out and about, it was a fantastic experience. The Lounge said: "Despite typical British weather, a wonderful time was had by all".

The trip was made possible due to funding received from Bromsgrove District Council, Equality Small Grants Scheme 2022/23.

■ **More information, contact rachel-rollinson@alvechurchlounge.org.uk**

Out and about: The group enjoy a hot drink and explore the Black Country Museum in the rain.

WEDDING SPECIAL

Our wedding issue is back!

Look out for features and information from local wedding suppliers in our February issue.

If you have a wedding business and would like more information about advertising in *The Village*, get in touch for a chat:
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t: 07536 987950

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PREPARE FOR THE SEASON

NOVEMBER means short, chilly days and long, dark evenings . . . if we're optimistic it means cosy mugs of hot chocolate, bonfires and roast dinners, and not drizzle and dry wind-burned skin.

It does however mean the start of the festive season (yes, the *C-word*, already!). Whether it's getting a head start on shopping, attending your work party, or just realising that your weekends suddenly started getting busier because of all the activities, chances are you've thought about Christmas already.

If you're a regular at your favourite nail salon or beauty therapist's, then you know how quickly appointments fill up in the run-up to the festive season, especially in the evenings and at the weekends. Quite often the December bookings start filling up in September. So, for those of you who are looking to have some festive nail art done, or to get your Christmas haircut, this is your reminder to book your appointment now.

The approaching winter is also a good time to review your skincare, the change in weather and colder conditions, can cause our skin to get irritated particularly when out for long periods of time or in windy conditions like standing outside for a few hours watching bonfires or Christmas lights. If you find your skin is getting irritated check in with one of the local skincare experts who should be able to advise how best to soothe chapped cheeks, or suggest a facial treatment.

The darker weather can also cause us to feel a bit more tired, it's harder to drag yourself out of bed and even harder to make it out for a run or to the gym when the sofa is calling. . . not to mention the shops have already brought out their festive snacks. The lack of light has also been linked to an increase in Seasonal Affective Disorder and low mood.

If you feel yourself struggling in the winter months – and there are many who do – there are plenty of local businesses who can help. There are experts in therapies including hypnotherapy, CBT and talking therapy, meditation and mindfulness groups and a variety of opportunities to get your body moving including group dance classes, running clubs and cycling groups.

If you're looking for an opportunity to relax and zone-out from the stress and the frantic running around which is inherent at this time of year, it could be the perfect excuse for a treat to help massage you into the holiday mood. A scalp or body treatment could be a wonderful way to relax and unwind after a busy year.

With this year's Christmas predicted to be busier than ever after the last two years of various lockdowns and restrictions, the main takeaway from all of this is; book your class, appointment or session now to avoid disappointment.

Wintry colours: Dark nails for winter by Lunatips, Cofton Hackett.

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Pride in everything

Vicky Osborne, General Manager of *Burcot Grange & Lodge* discusses the close relationship she has with the care home, the familial atmosphere for residents and what sets them apart.

What does working at Burcot Grange & The Lodge mean to you?

I don't really regard Burcot Grange and The Lodge as work; it's become part of my life over the past 23 years. It's my second home, and part of my family.

My own grandparents met at Burcot when it was the eye hospital. My grandmother was a nurse, and my grandfather was the gardener. I started working at Burcot as part of The Duke of Edinburgh Award at the age of 15.

I worked my way through each department to gain an understanding of all the roles. It was the original owners who encouraged me to carry out my nursing degree, which I did, and continued working while doing it. I am the longest standing team member here!

"We are the Burcot family, we have been for years and always will be."

What is it, in your view, that sets Burcot Grange and The Lodge apart from other care homes?

Burcot Grange & The Lodge are set in the beautiful five acres of grounds with our visiting deer and lovely wildlife.

We are unique in so many ways, especially The Grange with the open fires and rooms that can accommodate couples so that they can remain together.

Amazing relationships with residents: Vicky Osborne (centre) with the Burcot Lodge Team.

Part of a thriving and growing group: Vicky Osborne (centre) alongside the Burcot Grange Team.

Our teams make up the wonderful surroundings our residents live in and The Lodge in particular offers amazing relationships for our residents to ensure they are living well with their dementia.

We have wonderful relationships with our local community and professionals.

It was recently announced that Burcot Grange and The Lodge has become part of the Berkley Care Group family of luxury care homes. What will this mean for staff and residents at Burcot Grange and The Lodge?

It's wonderful to be a part of a great and growing group. But, I believe the home is only as good as the team who supports and cares for those living within it. We are the Burcot family, we have been for years and always will be. We take pride in everything we do and only strive for the best.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Our Christmas message baubles will be back next month (like the one on the right). If you'd like to feature a message from you or your business, contact **editor@villageonline.co.uk** for prices and booking.

Christmas is coming

It's a busy time of year and there are lots of village events on near you to help get you into the festive spirit . . .

Alvechurch Christmas Lights switch on will be held at 5pm on Saturday 3 December in The Square. Choirs will be performing and Father Christmas will also be there to watch the lights come on.

Alvechurch Parish Council's Christmas decoration competition is running again this year with trophies in each category. For more information visit alvechurch.gov.uk

Head along to Blackwell Tree lighting with Santa at the Wheel on Friday 25 November at 5pm.

Christmas tree lighting, carols and music from Blackwell concert Band with Santa at the Holy Trinity Church Lickey on Sunday 27 November at 4pm.

The Bel Canto Christmas concert will be held at St Laurence Church, Alvechurch, on 3 December. The £8 ticket will include a glass of wine or soft drink and a mince pie.

Alvechurch Village Hall is holding a Christmas Craft Fayre on November 13 from 10am-4pm with refreshments served. Entrance is £1, all proceeds will go towards the maintenance of the Village Hall.

Alvechurch Dramatic Society present their pantomime; *Rip Van Winkle and the Sleeping Beauty*, running from 24 - 26 November, 7:30pm (plus 2:30pm Saturday matinee) at Alvechurch Village Hall.

The Christmas Fair at Holy Trinity Church, Lickey is back with food stalls, craft stalls including LEGO and craft stations for the kids. £1 entry fee. 11am-2pm on 3 December. For information call Alison 0121 445 6170.

Children in the Parish are invited to enter Lickey and Blackwell Parish Council's Christmas Competition 2022. The theme is "The Christmas Star". To enter, please hand in your drawing or painting at your school – adding your name and age. Deadline is 30 November. Winners will receive a prize, with the overall winning entry made into the Parish council Christmas card.

Beoley WI will be hosting a Christmas Craft Fair at Beoley Village Hall on Saturday 19 November. The fair will be held between 10am-1pm and admission is free. Homemade tea and cakes will be served.

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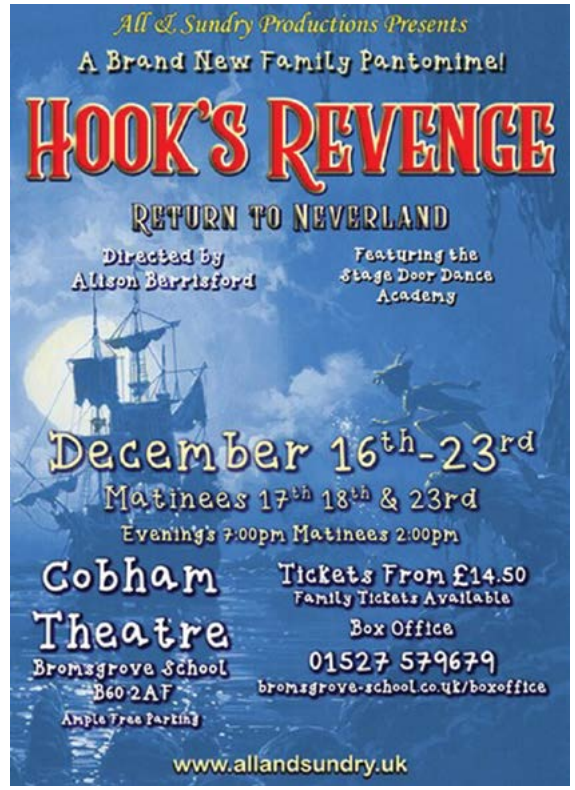

The parish of Alveoley?

Dear Editor - How generous of Alvechurch Parish Council to offer Beoley Village FC a home ground at Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields, and of the Alvechurch Inn to provide changing facilities and car parking for their Sunday matches. (*The Village Views* – October).

It strikes me that becoming part of Alvechurch is a wish of many Beoley residents. Now that Beoley's St Leonard's Church also shares a vicar with St Laurence's Church in Alvechurch, there is already a growing bond between Beoley and Alvechurch, so much so, that the two parishes should be become one entity sooner rather than later.

In the same way that Beoley Village FC is looking forward to becoming part of the Alvechurch community, there are other residents who would like that opportunity, too.

Paul Bridgewater
Beoley

Cofton critique

Dear Editor – How well put the recent letter in October's issue about how Cofton Hackett of old seems to be forgotten. So much was promised by St Modwen at the time.

I moved away from Cofton some 20 years ago, and was quite shocked on my return to see what looks like a LEGO add-on to a once-lovely place. There doesn't seem to be pride in the village anymore, and I was even more shocked just how close the houses are to Cofton church.

I appreciate times change but I do fear the surrounding fields of Cofton Hackett will fall into developers' hands in the years to come.

I'm no snob, but good Lord, I really do question just how ill-thought out the extension on to Cofton was.

Mark Randall,
Former Cofton Hackett resident

Corner query

Dear Editor – Would any of your readers be able to provide an explanation as to the origins of the "Roberts Corner" location name at the north end of Alvechurch?

Marc Worrall, Chairman
Alvechurch Parish Council

Pram peril

Dear Editor – Yet again, I had to take a pram into a busy road because someone had parked their vehicle across the pavement on Callow Hill Road, Alvechurch. Isn't there a law to stop this happening?

Worried resident

Have your say . . . about anything!

email: editor@villageonline.co.uk
or write to: Letters, The Village,
The Limes, Swan Street, Alvechurch B48 7RR

Please include your name and address – even if you request them to be withheld from publication. We reserve the right to edit submissions for reasons of space or legality.
The deadline for the next issue is November 14th 2022.

WHERE'S VINNY?

TIM HICKEY, aged eight, of The Oakalls and a pupil at Finstall First School, shows off the Mini Vinny he won in October's hunt the hedgehog competition in *The Village*.

If you want to win one for yourself, you'll need to try to find the little hedgehog hiding somewhere in this magazine (the one shown above is just a guide!), and we think this month's is a little trickier!

Tell us where he's hiding via phone, email or post – see details on bottom of the page opposite – and please include your name, address and phone number, especially if leaving a voicemail message, and we'll draw a winner at random.

The closing date is midnight on November 13. We'll let you know if you've won and you can collect your Mini Vinny from our office – and pose for a photo with your prize!

Lily adds to big total

Dear Editor – Thank you for publicising Hillfields Animal Sanctuary's Open Afternoon in Blackwell.

Just to confirm that £1,210.47 was raised for Hillfields, including £120 donated by Lily May Jones for the sale of bracelets she has been making and selling to raise money for Hillfields.

Lily (pictured left, with DJ the goat) sold many of the bracelets at the Open Afternoon and there was a wonderful array of colours!

Lily, who lives in Harwood Park in Bromsgrove, attends Aston Fields Middle School and has been inspired by her love of animals and wildlife.

Lyn Tudor who has run Hillfields for more than 40 years would like to say "thank you" to everyone who attended the Open Afternoon on Sunday 18th September and is also grateful to all the volunteers who helped on the afternoon.

The amount of £1,210.47 will go towards paying for the hay for the animals for the winter, and Lyn was thrilled by the number of people who attended and kindly supported her work.

Ingrid Bromley
Blackwell

AWARD-WINNING CARE

The award-winning Homemakers of Hamberley - a carer, housekeeper and companion all in one person.

COFTON Park Manor is proud to introduce their unique and innovative model of care for the older community of Cofton Hackett.

Opening soon, Cofton Park Manor in Lickey Road will offer residential, dementia and nursing care, as well as short breaks for the older community, all within a truly luxurious setting.

The stunning home includes all the features that you would expect from a high-quality care home, such as a wellbeing and beauty salon, an elegant cafe and bar and a classic cinema.

But as you walk through the doors you'll notice a radically different way of providing personalised care for older people.

Within the home you will find the Homemakers of Hamberley – carers, companions and housekeepers all in one person.

So that means that if residents need somebody to share a cup of tea with, join you for activities or simply sit quietly with you, the Homemakers are there.

If bedrooms need a quick tidy in between scheduled cleans, or if care requirements change and a daily care plan needs updating – the Homemakers are there.

The Homemakers holistically support resident care needs just as they would in the residents' own home. They are universal workers, providing gap-free care, rather than being restricted to only fulfilling certain elements of care provision.

The feedback from families has been wonderful, with many sharing how impressed they are with the new way of providing care.

"Mum always looks lovely when we visit as the Homemakers take the time to make sure her hair, nails and make up are done, giving her the respect and dignity she deserves," enthuses a daughter of a relative.

The Homemakers of Hamberley and Cofton Park Manor are part of Hamberley Care Homes who were awarded 'Residential Care Provider of the Year' this year for the second time in recognition of their groundbreaking approach.

The judging panel congratulated the team for focusing on the residents' experience of care above anything else. One judge said: "The resident is clearly at the centre of everything. Brilliantly innovative to create the role of "Homemaker"."

Hamberley Care Homes believe the unique combination of Homemakers, a Wellbeing & Lifestyle Coach and an expert clinical team, working together within one of the most beautiful living environments in Cofton Hackett, is the most effective way to deliver outstanding care.

And the team would love to show you themselves – Cofton Park Manor is now open for tours.

Homemakers: Holistically support residents' needs just like they would at home.

If you'd like to find out more about the award-winning Homemakers, and see the luxury facilities Cofton Park Manor has to offer then please do contact the team today to book in your visit on 01213 872722 or email enquiries@hamberleycarehomes.co.uk

Cofton Park Manor | 466 Lickey Road | Cofton Hackett | B45 8UU

Hall celebrates first year

BLACKWELL Community Hall is celebrating the first anniversary of its new identity after a year of success and transformation.

Around 40 villagers, armed with paint brushes, brooms and repair kits took part in a weekend-long makeover to renovate the century-old building in 2021.

Twelve months on, the hall is now a frequent hive of activity with around a dozen regular classes catering for all ages – from toddler mornings, to gentle exercise classes, a walking group and Crafternoon Tea sessions.

More strenuous activities include circuit training, pilates, ballet and table tennis. A theatre group and a craft group for teenagers have just started.

Hall committee chair Terry Pauley said he was delighted at the progress made in the first year. "The building hadn't really been used for the community in such a long time, and now we see parties there most weekends and people coming to regular classes," he added.

"It's nice to see the hall back in use and we're very pleased that the community is reconnecting with the building."

Major renovations worth more than £20,000 have also taken place, paid for by substantial grants. There's a new heating and hot water system, a surfaced drive, renovated drains and a refurbished toilet.

Above: Villagers enjoying Crafternoon tea in the refurbished hall.
Left: Building up a sweat at one of the exercise classes held in the hall.

But tougher times may be ahead, and organisers hope more people will sign up to use facilities that have been described as "ridiculously cheap!"

Weekday bookings of the spacious hall cost just £12 an hour, and weekend slots are a minimum of four hours, costing £40.

"It's a community facility so it's never been about making money," Terry added. "But we will now have to start paying rent, and heating costs are a bit of an unknown.

"We just need a steady level of bookings that mean we can cover our costs. So we do need the local community to continue using the facilities so we can make ends meet."

The building on Green Hill dates back to 1893 when it was constructed as a schoolroom before being given to the Methodist Church in 1920. The church was keen to allow villagers to take over the hall for community and faith activities. The alternative was to sell the property.

■ **For more details and bookings visit facebook.com/BCHBlackwell or contact bchblackwell@gmail.com**

CATS CHORUS held a musical bingo evening at Barnt Green Social Club (above) where £445 was raised for Your Ideas Redditch. Cats Chorus is a small, friendly all-access singing group that meets on Tuesdays from 7.30-9pm at The Wheel, Blackwell. The group would welcome new members – anyone who is interested in joining can contact Jayne on 07429 055190.

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20 Years Ago

From **The Village** archive

THE COVER of our November 2002 issue is an iconic and now nostalgic shot of Alvechurch Alight when 3,000 villagers joined in the fun for 2002 with hundreds attending other events over the three-day festival, including Battle of the Bands, the Village Showcase and a History Alight walk around Alvechurch. A plea for new volunteers to take the reins and organise the future festivals also features.

TRADERS GET THE HUMP

In a news item that perhaps still resonates today, Barnt Green traders joined forces to complain about traffic calming work on their high street, which had affected their businesses. The installation of speed platforms along Hewell Road, had, at the time of publication taken three months and were still continuing. The traders said that shoppers had been put off by the work and lack of parking. The roadworks, they said, also highlighted the village's parking problems.

BEAR HILL PRE-SCHOOLERS (from left) Jacob Earles, Cavan O'Malley, Craig Reynolds, George Preston, Arlan Hill, Ben Seeney, Isabella Burton and Robbie Forbes along with their fellow pupils all aged three and four, were asked to provide background sound for an episode of *The Archers*.

The episode featured a children's party and required the sound of laughing children, supervisor Shirley Morrison said, of the recording "They made lots of unbroadcastable noises!" but the sound recordest got what she needed. What a claim to fame!

10 Years Ago

From **The Village** archive

THE COVER of our November 2012 issue of ice crystals around the moon in Barnt Green was taken by local wildlife photographer Tim Hunt. Tim, who grew up in the village and attended St Andrew's First School had moved back with his family and continued to go out with his camera to capture the local area.

THE MYSTERY OF NORAH MAY

Lillian and Tom Willis, of Alvechurch, told *The Village* about a document titled *Norah May of Alvechurch* which had come into their possession one day when a couple knocked on their door and said that Tom, who was involved in local history, might be interested in the story. Lillian said: "They wouldn't give their names, but we assumed they were descendents of Norah. They didn't live in Alvechurch so we have no idea how they found us". The document turned out to be the memoirs of a woman born in Alvechurch in 1905. The memoirs were donated to Alvechurch Historical Society, but *The Village* was able to print Norah May's story and hoped to find out more about who she was. Readers were encouraged to get in touch if they could shed any light on the mysterious Norah May and what might have happened to her . . .

THE LOUNGE hosted a "diagnostics workshop" under the guidance of community leader Chris Allen. More than 25 people turned up for the event, far exceeding the expections (which was about ten at most) including many young people demonstrating their connection to The Lounge. Attendees were asked to imagine the future and a successful three years ahead, and then present their visions via a LEGO model. *The Village* reported that another workshop was to be held to look at some of the themes uncovered by the evening.

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Meet the team

Martin Pryor
Financial Planner & Adviser
Business & Finance degree to Graduate training course at Prudential, leading to becoming a qualified independent financial adviser and setting up PPM Financial Planning in 2006.

Laura Daniels
Mortgage Adviser
Laura joined in 2016, providing admin support whilst completing training to become our qualified mortgage broker.

Nicky Lowndes
General Manager
Nicky Joined PPM Financial Planning at the very beginning in 2006 bringing with her 19 years of banking experience with HSBC.

Laura Siddall
Financial Adviser
Laura has 19 years of industry experience. Laura's role is to construct financial plans for clients using our cash flow modelling software, helping deliver true financial planning.

Louise Wheeler
Paraplanner
Louise Joined PPM in September 2021, bringing with her 8 years of paraplanning experience and 13 years working within financial services.

FOR RICHER OR POORER

They say that opposites attract and we see this all the time as we meet new clients. Often there is an optimist in the relationship and there is also a pessimist. We also find that couples have different views on money and often for every saver there is an opposite spender!

If you're a penny pincher but your spouse is penny wise and pound foolish, money arguments may frequently erupt. Couples who have opposite philosophies regarding saving and spending often have trouble finding common ground. Thinking of yourselves as two sides of the same coin may help you appreciate your financial differences.

Heads or tails, saver or spender?

If you're a saver, you love having money in the bank, investing in your future, and saving for a rainy day. You probably hate credit card debt and spend money cautiously.

Your spender spouse may seem impulsive, prompting you to think, "Don't you care about our future?" But you may come across as controlling or miserly to your spouse who thinks, "Just for once, can't you loosen up? We really need some things!"

Such different outlooks can lead to mistrust and resentment. But are your characterisations fair? Your money habits may have a lot to do with how you were raised and your personal experience. Being a saver or a spender may come naturally; instead of assigning blame, try to see your spouse's side.

Start by discussing your common values. What do you want to accomplish together? Recognise that spenders may be more focused on short-term goals, while savers may be more focused on long-term goals.

Ultimately, whether you're saving for a holiday, a car, private and/or further education, or retirement, your money will be spent on something. It's simply a matter of deciding together when and how to spend it.

When a saver marries a spender, every penny counts, writes **Martin Pryor.**

A penny for your thoughts?

Sometimes couples avoid talking about money because they are afraid to argue. But talking about money may actually help you and your spouse avoid conflict. Scheduling regular money meetings could help you gain a better understanding of your finances and provide a forum for handling disagreements . . . make sure the meeting involves a glass of wine.

To help ensure a productive discussion, establish some ground rules. For example, you might set a time limit, insist that both of you come prepared, and take a break in the event the discussion becomes heated. Communication and compromise are key. Don't assume you know what your spouse is thinking: ask, and be willing to negotiate.

Here are some questions to get started:

- What does money represent to you? Security? Freedom? The opportunity to help others?
- What are your short-term and long-term savings goals?
- How much money is coming in and how much is going out? Never assume that your spouse knows as much about your finances as you do.
- How comfortable are you with debt, including mortgage debt, credit card debt and loans?
- Who should you spend money on? Do you agree on how much to give to your children or how much to spend on gifts to family members and friends, for example?
- What rules would you like to apply to purchases? One option is to set a limit on how much one spouse can spend on an item without consulting the other.
- Would you like to set aside some discretionary money for each of you? Then you would be free to save or spend those pounds without having to justify your decision.

Once you've explored these topics, you can create a concrete budget or spending plan that reflects your financial personalities. To satisfy you both, make savings an "expense" and allow some room in the budget for unexpected expenses. And track your progress. Having regular meetings to go over your finances will enable you to celebrate your financial successes or identify areas where you need to improve. Be willing to make adjustments if necessary.

Finally, recognise that getting on the same page is going to take some work. When you got married, you promised to love your spouse for richer or poorer. Maybe it's time to put your money where your mouth is?

Of course, at PPM we can provide the structure for these kinds of meetings and we have the added advantage of having the industry leading cash flow modelling software available to forecast your spend and create a meaningful long term plan.

If you feel it is time for you to create a financial plan, then give us a call and we can arrange an initial no-cost meeting where we can explain our process and how it could help you.

Martin Pryor
Lifestyle Financial Planner

For more information, please contact us
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The Value of your investments can go down as well as up and you may not get back the full amount you invested. You should seek independent financial advice if you are unsure of the right decision for your circumstances.

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Village Financial Solutions joins forces with Michelle & Co Sales & Lettings.

Village Financial continues to work in partnership with Michelle & Co helping home movers from their Barnt Green office.

It is now more important than ever that you get the right advice when selling your home and Michelle and Shaya Mehjoo, the directors of Michelle & Co, ensure that personal service comes first, guaranteeing a friendly and professional service from start to finish.

Please call Michelle and Co on 0121 274 0568 and take advantage of their years of experience to appraise your property and discuss how they can maximise your chances of selling your home in a timely and efficient manner.

Mark and the team at Village Financial will continue to offer support for all your mortgage and protection needs, whether that be for first-time buyers, home movers or just looking for a new mortgage deal. They will also continue to offer advice for equity release and buy to let mortgage needs.

If you are concerned about interest rates and are looking to re-finance, they are now able to reserve a rate up to six months in advance of your current mortgage rate expiring. In the current climate where we are seeing interest rates rise, it is important to act early.

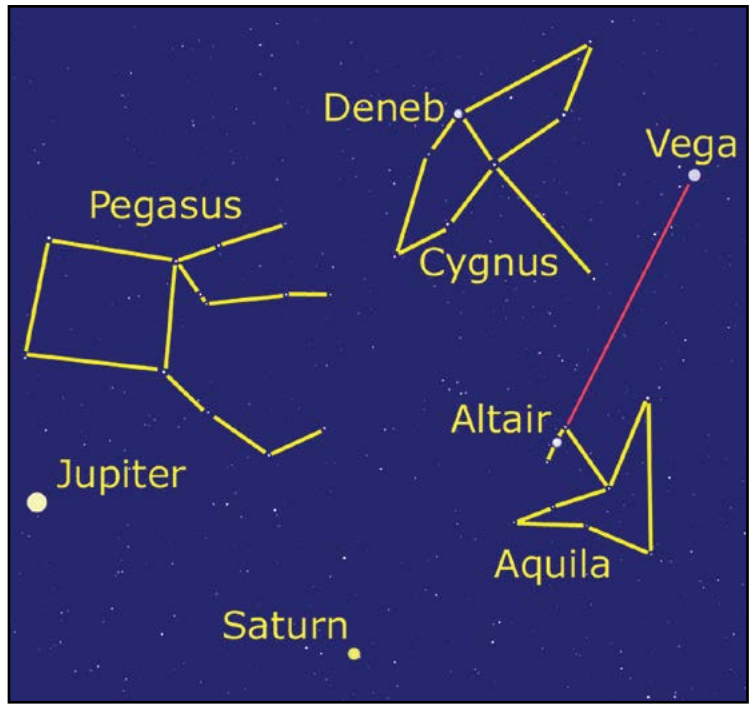
Please feel free to make an appointment by calling 0121 445 1227 or by emailing: info@villagefinancial.co.uk

Mark Meads (above) with the Michelle & Co team and (right) ready to provide expert advice.

This firm usually charges a fee for mortgage advice. The amount of the fee will depend upon your needs and circumstances. This will be discussed and agreed with you at the earliest opportunity. Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up payments on your mortgage. An Equity Release product will reduce the value of your estate, will not be suitable for everyone and may affect your entitlement to state benefits. To understand the features and risks please ask for a personalised illustration. Village Financial Solutions Ltd is an appointed representative of PRIMIS Mortgage Network. PRIMIS Mortgage Network is a trading style of Personal Touch Financial Services Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

NOVEMBER FILLS THE SKY

Amateur astronomer **Brian Watkiss** peers into the *Village* night sky.



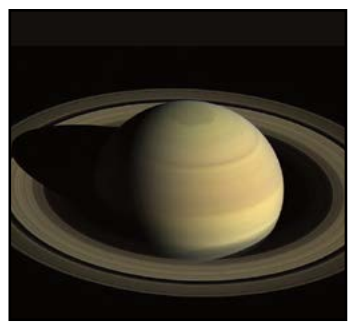
The hunt for Saturn: imagine a line down and left to reach Saturn.

NOVEMBER and the evenings start much sooner with the Sun setting just after 4pm. Still, we have Guy Fawkes night and the Alvechurch village panto to look forward to (the 24th to the 26th in the Village Hall, if you're interested).

As for our evening skies, we've been waiting all summer for a planet to appear and then three come along all at once. When? Where? I hear you ask. Well, starting as soon as the sky is properly dark, say about 6pm, face to the south and look high in the sky, almost overhead. Yes, I know this is far too high for planets to appear at our latitude before you write in but stay with me.

There you will find a really bright star. This is Vega, one of the brightest stars in the sky at the moment and appearing to have a slight blueish tinge. Imagine a line down and a little to the left and almost halfway to the Horizon is another bright star. This is Altair in the constellation of Aquila, the Eagle.

Keep following this line down nearly as much again and just to the left of it is another bright star. Except this isn't a star it is Saturn, a giant of a planet which was extensively explored by an orbiter called *Cassini* for a little over 13 years until it dived into the planet's atmosphere five years ago. It returned some spectacular pictures that can still be found on the internet.



Cassini's view: An orbiter image of Saturn (courtesy of NASA).

A nearly half Moon is close by on the 1st of the month and again on the 28th.

Over to the left in the south east is Jupiter, very easy to identify as it is the brightest object in the entire sky apart from the Moon. It is only slightly larger than Saturn but is so much brighter because it is almost half as far away.

Jupiter has also been extensively explored by a probe called *Juno*, which is still in action. These two giants are with us all month.

A few hours later, around 9pm, another planet appears over in the north east. This is Mars, easily recognisable by its brightness and by its distinct reddish hue. Despite being one sixth of the distance away It's not as bright as Jupiter on account of it being so tiny.

Mercury is the only other "true" planet that is smaller but not by much. Mars is the most explored planet in the Solar System with 13 probes currently operating there.

Speaking of which, NASA's Artemis 1 is due to launch this month, sometime between the 12th and the 27th. It won't be directly visible from Alvechurch, of course, but anyone with an interest in space will want to follow the progress of this most exciting mission.

For spacecraft that you can see, check heavens-above.com, you'll be surprised at how many there are.

Also, keep an eye on the sky around the 17th of the month which is the peak of the Leonid Meteor Shower.

Happy sky watching.

Flower farm plea

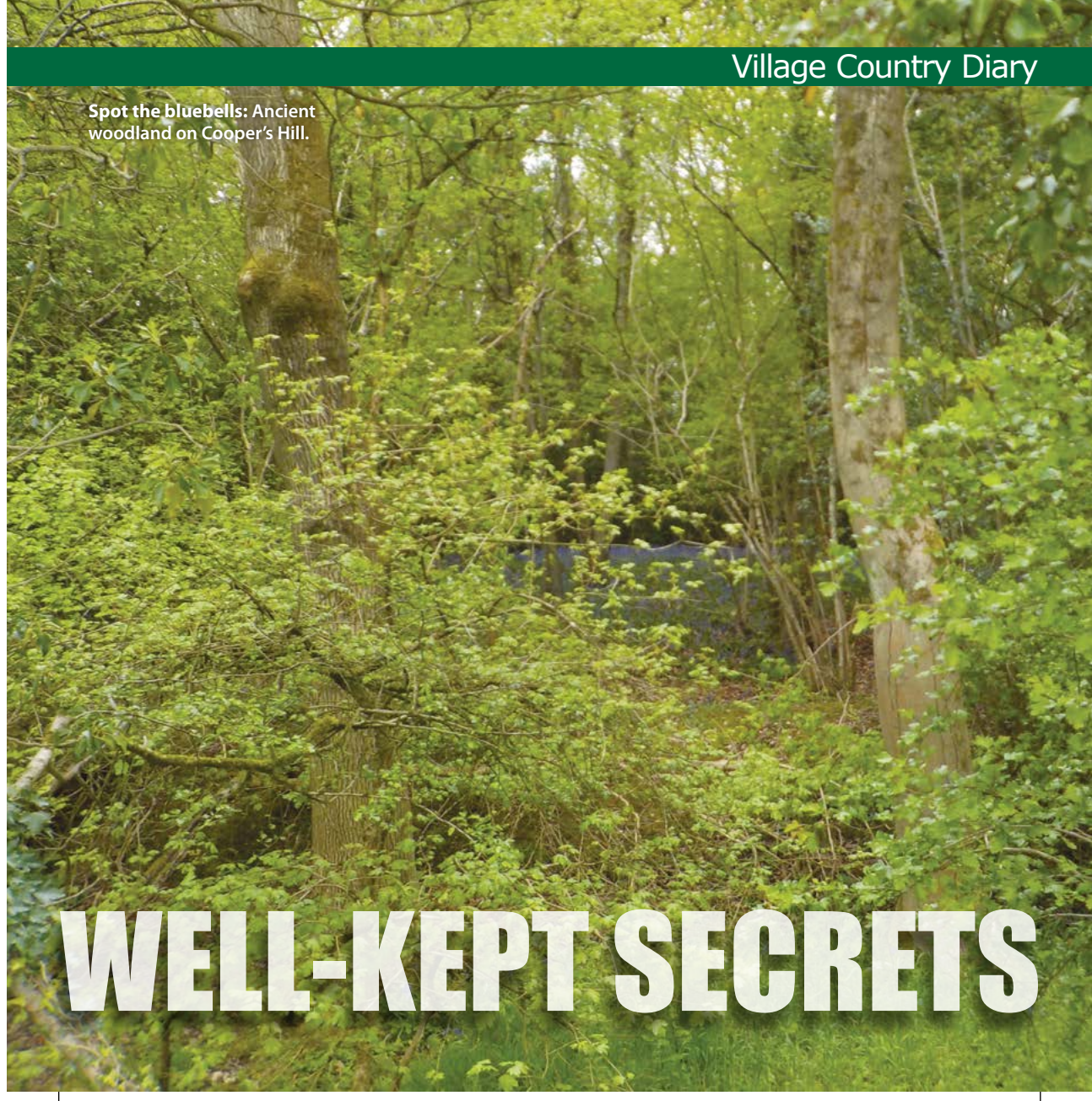
TWO women with a passion for botany are seeking space for a flower farm to further their green fingers. Amelia, who is trained in horticulture, and Vanessa, whose interests lie in foraging plants, edible flowers and fungi, have been developing their idea and are now looking for a space to grow the idea.

Asked why they were interested in a flower farm, they said: "Being around flowers, growing things and being creative is good for our mental wellbeing and we'd love to share that with the local community. We would love the flower farm to evolve to be community-based, offering workshops for small groups."

The farm will be for growing seasonal flowers for fresh-cut bouquets and, along with dried flower arrangements, wreath and tea making, Ness and Amelia have plans for more exciting developments.

They are looking for two to three acres of land to rent in the *Village* area for the flower farm, with easy car access and access to water, possibly with an outbuilding to be used for seed and flower preparation. In addition to rent, the landowner will be the recipient of plenty of pretty flowers.

■ **If you own land and would be interested in supporting a local Flower Farm, contact Ness and Amelia on wildandwhimsyflowers@gmail.com**



Spot the bluebells: Ancient woodland on Cooper's Hill.

AUTUMN didn't after all come early. Many trees got a second lot of green leaves after the drought broke. September (and October so far) was mild. So, the leaves didn't turn colour early, and trees turned in a different order from usual. Most ash stayed green later and some field maples turned early. Once they changed, they all coloured up quickly though. One or two trees did lose their leaves prematurely – I saw a beech in September covered in mast but leafless. And some of the Sequoias (Wellingtonias) in Alvechurch have suffered along with other non-native trees.

This month and next I am looking at local places where natural habitat is protected. These range from

Mary Green takes us to some village places where natural habitats have been allowed to thrive.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) through nature reserves to local wildlife sites and farmland in environmental stewardship. Many of these are not accessible to the public as part of the protection, others

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Above: Good hedges on the farm, with grazing cattle.

continues from previous page

you can walk through. The level of protection these places get is variable and possibly getting less. In most cases the site is owned by a private individual or public organisation responsible for maintaining it with the help of bodies such as Natural England, the Environment Agency or DEFRA. Sometimes they are owned by Wildlife Trusts or other charities who may also help private owners with them. There are lots of these sites in the *Village* area, many not well known, others you will know but may not know they are protected.

If I walk from my house in Withybed up the field footpaths to Foxhill, I am passing through land in environmental stewardship. This is farmed in ways which encourage sustainability and biodiversity. The fields are hay meadows grazed by longhorn cattle which eat only grassland plants and their hay ("pasture fed"). The hedges are laid and tended properly, water flow is controlled by ponds and there are no pesticides, weed killers or artificial fertilisers. Importantly, the soil hosts diverse micro-organisms and invertebrates, and is not depleted.

Sustainable farms like this have been supported by European grants in the past, quite difficult to get when most of the subsidies were just given on acreage. The Government promised to support them even better post-Brexit, but this is now in some doubt and farmers are still waiting to find out what funding they can get for helping the environment.

At the top of Fox Hill, one of the fields is even more special, being a Local Wildlife Site. It's the field with the marshy headwaters of the dingle that runs down through Withybed, joined by other small dingles to make a big stream at the bottom. It has wetland plants like ragged-robin, brooklime, marsh marigold and marsh St John's wort, a lot of unusual double-flowered lady's smock, and, in the drier patches, betony, which only survives in undisturbed pasture.

The field is lightly grazed by cattle for a brief period each year but otherwise left alone. You can see it from the path – sometimes in spring the lady's smock shows up white and in summer the ragged-robin is pink. I have been lucky enough to visit it in summer and it is fluttering with butterflies.

Local Wildlife Sites are recognised in local planning as having some special habitat which needs protection. Landowners manage them usually without any financial support, though they may attract funding as part of environmental schemes. The Wildlife Trust helps with things like surveys and advice.

If you turn right at the top of the fields, walk along Foxhill Lane and then turn down Cooper's Hill, you will see another Special Wildlife Site on your left – an old woodland, also part of the same farm. It's not open to the public but you can see it from the road. There's an even better view if you cross Cooper's Hill and walk along the track beside the wood towards the motorway footbridge. Notice the spring bluebells which show that it's old woodland, and the mixture of tree species of all shapes and sizes including old oaks. The soil is slightly different here and there are bilberry patches in the ground flora. This wood is a remnant of the old forest of Feckenham which once covered the area. It was bought by the farm to save it from inappropriate development. Down Cooper's Hill a beautiful newly-laid hedge continues biodiversity.

Other LWSs include the Wiggin Meadows in Alvechurch (the park) and the whole of the Worcester- Birmingham canal in our patch. The Meadows are maintained by the Parish Council and include two woodland patches, a wildflower area, a stretch of the river Arrow and some ancient trees.

They are preparing an information board about the wildflower patch. Many people have a mistaken idea about what native wildflowers look like, and don't realise what a wonderful mix they have there. There are about 30 different local species in this one patch, flowering from March through to September, including Good Friday grass, goldilocks buttercup and pignut, all of which are increasingly rare. Both wooded areas have traces of ancient woodland, with bluebells in one and wild garlic in the other in spring. One of the oaks is probably the oldest in the area, though it has been cut back so much in past years that you don't see it in its full glory. There are old black poplars too, an increasingly rare tree.

Bright white: Double lady's smock, found on Foxhills field.

Check the hedges: Blossoming hedge on Cooper's Hill.

Vivid pink: Ragged Robin on Foxhills.

Alongside the road: Ancient trees found on Cooper's Hill.

Above: Hedgehog fungus on the canal.

The Meadows are also recreation areas, so the council has to balance the needs of people and wildlife. Sometimes this is to the detriment of wildlife, like mowing vegetation and draining what would naturally be wet in winter, but that makes it more usable for people.

The canal is managed by the Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT), and they too have to balance recreational needs with ecology. In the past they have often prioritised the needs of boaters: these days they recognise more the need to maintain and enhance the canal for biodiversity. There is a perennial argument about reed beds, so vital for bird-life but annoying to boaters!

The last two years we've seen good and bad examples. Last year they over-cut the vegetation so the pollen corridor disappeared. This year went well at first, not cutting back (with the orchid featured in the *Village* appearing!) until they did the "winter cut" early, in September, really bad for the aquatic fringe plants which were still thriving. This can disrupt the balance of species, as tougher plants, especially grass, grow back in the autumn

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Goldilocks in The Meadows.

Reed bed and aquatic fringe along the canal.

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and weaken the more fragile plants. Generally, though, the hedges along the canal are allowed to grow tall and flower and fruit, unlike nearby roads and fields, so they are important habitat for fungi and also birds and insects.

One problem is that the funding CRT gets for environmental enhancement is project-based – it has to add something new, rather than improve maintenance of what's already there. CRT has made a commitment to using project funding to plant some fruit trees on two canalside patches near the Station Road bridge in Alvechurch.

Part used to be a plum orchard before it was destroyed by Network Rail. It's now a wild flower patch but needs a bit of help: like the patch in the Meadows, it needs a winter cut occasionally to maintain the balance of species. We should see trees planted this winter, and hopefully it might lead to better maintenance too. The other patch is all brambles and nettles, probably because it was once used for dumping dredgings. This will benefit from trees making it more diverse.

There are other LWSs round the area, often quite small fields or patches of woodland. Rowney Green has several, including Peck Wood and other woodland patches. Much of Rowney Green is part of the ancient Alvechurch Park, a hunting forest for the Bishops of Worcester. One of the things LWSs do is recognise remnants of ancient landscapes like this.

Unfortunately, Special Wildlife Sites don't have any statutory protection. They are taken account of in local plans, from our local Parish Neighbourhood Plan to bigger District Council housing planning, but can be destroyed if thought necessary. I have a feeling they will be allowed to disappear from the planning framework altogether.

I haven't even got to the actual nature reserves and SSSIs (more next month), but this is a flavour of the kind of very local habitats here which are vital in keeping the biodiversity of our area alive. You'll notice most of them are on land used for other purposes – farming, boating, fishing, sport, and that they are looked after by different individuals and bodies and funded by a complex of organisations. All of this makes them vulnerable, but also gives them strength as people of all kinds are involved in their care. We need to keep an eye on them!

■ Below is my latest poem for the Withybed Poets. When I take people on "biodiversity walks" it's partly about understanding the way nature and humanity work together, but also about observing what's under your nose every day. . . .

The view from here

Looking down, I see the shapes the woodland makes
And how this once was forest, the hedges left reminders
I see the houses cluster then spread, as our lives moved
From collectivism to individuality.
But I can't see if the trees are oaks or beech
If the oaks have acorns, if it is a mast year,
If they are sessile or pedunculate
Or put my arms round them to guess their age.
I can't see if the house is warm and welcoming
Or poverty-cold or heart-cold or empty.

Looking back over life I see the patterns of love
Of loss of love, of birth and death
Forgetting the chaos of the first kiss, the smell
The taste of familiar and unfamiliar bodies, close up.
It's good to know about the world, to theorise,
Knowing what Crataegus monogyna is,
But nothing beats the sight and smell and touch
Of the first hawthorn blossom every May.
In my old age, may I learn the wisdom of distance
But touch each day alive in its new light.

The anonymous birder

How to enjoy village birdlife

Let's talk about ducks

Fancy a new outfit for the Winter season? Something attractive to re-establish old bonds or who knows, even attract a new partner? If the answer is yes, well that's what ducks are up to as well.

In late summer you may have noticed lots of dishevelled mallards or what seems like an absence of male ducks at all. They are in fact undergoing their annual moult and are in what is known as their "eclipse' plumage. The toned-down colours, when males can resemble females, helps them to keep a low profile, protecting them from predators. At this time flight may be poor or not possible at all.

After breeding, many birds grow new feathers in order to fly well for migration where applicable, do general bird stuff and also be in peak plumage to attract a mate. Luckily for us, this means that by the time winter arrives our wild ducks are in tip top condition with spanking new feathers.

There may be some wildfowl visitors worth looking out for on your local water to swell the ranks of the ubiquitous mallard. Let's not get too sniffy about the now pristine mallard by the way. They are after all, arguably the world's most successful duck. This is, however, more due to the fact they are not fussy about where they live and what they eat rather than a highly driven nature.

Two of the more common visitors to spot locally are the tufted duck and pochard. The male "tufty" being distinctively black and white with a trendy pony tail. The female has the same pattern but in brown with a more modest tuft. Both have a yellow eye. The male pochard is glossy black fore and aft, pale grey in the middle with a distinctive tan head and a red eye. The female being pale brown and grey.

Winter plumage (above): A pair of mallards and a male mandarin on the frozen canal.
Left: a mandarin drake in his summer plumage.
Pictures/Mary Green

These are diving ducks and will completely submerse themselves in search of molluscs, insects and vegetation, pochards preferring the latter. These two lovely ducks are resident breeders but the ones you may see could have arrived from colder northern and eastern climes.

Male pochards do a "boys only" migration moult, which involves flying off to a safe location with plenty of food, where they hang out until their new feathers are ready. They then carry on to their wintering grounds.

There are more than 20 species of duck that can be seen in Britain and a visit to a local reserve will yield several of these. They can be divided into diving or dabbling ducks. Dabblers are the ones that up-end themselves and/or sieve the surface of the water for food. Some just prefer eating grass. Mallards of course will do all of this. Divers, such as the pochard and tufted, will perform a surface dive and can remain submerged for some time bobbing up some distance from their entry point. Great fun for young birdwatchers – like a gentler version of whack-a-mole.

An unusual resident on the village canal is the mandarin duck – an introduced species in the mid 18th century which developed a British wild population. Named after, but not at all resembling, a Chinese civil servant, the males look like they are the outcome of a "design an oriental duck" competition, the female also striking but duller. Bright colours and nests don't mix, so they nest in tree holes and the young have to jump out when fledging, often falling some distance, hopefully with a watery or soft landing.

Good luck sorting your dabblers, divers and maybe even a tree nester – and spare a thought for what they have been through to scrub up so well.

JL

Darker, dewy months

Alvechurch amateur weatherman **Phil Thomas** records the changes.

SEPTEMBER remained quite warm for the first half of the month but it was also unsettled and we experienced a number of storms, with thunder heard on the 5th, 7th and 8th.

There was a relatively wet spell, with 20.2mm of rainfall falling over a short period between the 4th and 5th resulting in short-term local flooding.

The rest of the month remained quite overcast with only 63.4 hours of sunshine, making up only 50% of the 91-22 average. A fairly average but dark early Autumn month.

Heading into October, the weather changed to more autumnal conditions, although it was drier than usual with only 22% of the average rainfall for the first half of the month.

Sunshine again remained low, like September resulting in darker days than average. Temperature remained what we'd expect in October; around average, with chilly nights and heavy dew in the mornings, followed by cooler days.

The Outlook

The beginning of November may become more widely unsettled, bringing sunny spells between extended showery periods as frontal systems pass. Western and southern areas are likely to be mild, with some locally colder spells. Temperatures are likely to be near normal, or perhaps warmer during sunny spells.

A prolonged period of settled weather is more likely to develop further into November, bringing drier conditions. Nights are expected to be colder than of late, with the chance of mist, fog, or frost, however daytime temperatures will generally be around normal for the time of year.

September 2022

Mean Max	18.6C	0.1C above average
Mean Min	10.2C	0.5C above average
Mean	14.4C	0.3C above average
Rainfall	57.2mm	88% of average
Sunshine	63.4hrs	50% of average

October 2022 (to the 17th)

Mean Max	16.4C	2.1C above average
Mean Min	7.2C	0.1C above average
Mean	11.8C	1.1C above average
Rainfall	18.2mm	22% of average
Sunshine	43.1hrs	42% of average

Pictured: Misty , dewy mornings with cold skies as autumnal weather ramps up in October.

More information at ***www.alvechurchweather.metsite.com*** You can see an improved HD weather-cam, updated at one-minute intervals, at: ***www.alvechurchweather.metsite.com/webcam_alvechurch.php***

WHAT'S ON GUIDE

RIP VAN WINKLE MEETS THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

IT'S PANTO time for Alvechurch Dramatic Society (oh yes it is!), as writers Chris Davies and Paul Chamberlain reunite for their fifth go (they'll get in right eventually) with *Rip van Winkle and the Sleeping Beauty*.

Mashing up the tales of two famous sleepers, the show starts with the familiar story of Sleeping Beauty, adds in their version of Rip van Winkle and his colourful family, and then asks what happened after everyone woke up . . .

Alongside the usual panto fun, you can expect to find talking trees, twin Princes, Punch and Judy, elves both naughty and nice, and even a magic unicorn!

See the show at Alvechurch Village Hall and enjoy an evening of fun and frivolity for all the family.

Performances are on Thursday 24th - Saturday 26th November, 7:30pm (plus 2:30pm Saturday matinee) at Alvechurch Village Hall.

■ Tickets £8; £7 concessions, available from The Lounge, Alvechurch; or you can get in touch by phoning/texting 07977 140088 or emailing ads.alvechurch@gmail.com

EVENTS

ST GODWALD'S Community Cafe meets every other Fri from 10am–noon at St Godwald's Room adjacent to the Church Hall, Finstall Road, Bromsgrove. Extra safety measures are in place.
Friendship, cake, tea/coffee. Donations welcome— monies to St Basil's charity for homeless youngsters. More info: davidrowe876@btinternet.com

The ACOUSTIC ROOTS Christmas gig will be on December 23rd this year.

On the 23 November Beoley Village Hall will host the PEDIGREE JAZZ BAND. Some fantastic entertainment is guaranteed. Come and support live jazz and see a great band! The Hall and Bar open at 7.45pm, with music from 8.15pm. Tickets are £12 each.
Also at Beoley Village Hall, on Saturday 3 December 2022 THE REFLECTIONS will be playing a selection of 1960s Pop and Rock & Roll music. The Reflections have played at Beoley Village Hall several times. This event was originally planned for 2021 and we are delighted that, 12 months later, we are finally able to host them! The Hall and bar open at 7.15pm for this event with the entertainment starting at 8pm. We expect a high demand for tickets, so please book in advance. Tickets - £12. For further details on both events, or to order your advance tickets, call 07973 759340 (before 9.00pm please) or 01527-66646 (again, before 9.00pm please).

MUSIC

ALVECHURCH COMMUNITY CHOIR usually meets in the Village Hall on Mondays at 7.30pm with occasional outdoor sessions and a live stream for members who aren't able yet to meet indoors. Two of our November sessions are in Alvechurch Cricket Club instead – please check. The choir is inclusive and open to everyone, whether you think you can sing or not. They will be carol singing at the Lights Switch on in Alvechurch on 3 December and outside the Crown on 11 December, and are happy to sing carols for other organisations in the run up to Christmas. For more information or to join, see www.alvechurchcommunitychoir.org.uk

THE ASKLEPIOS ORCHESTRA, conducted by Lee Armstrong, will give their Autumn Concert on Sunday 27th November 2022 at 7.30pm in St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, B45 8NR. The programme will include:- Beethoven Egmont Overture; Sibelius Pelleas et Mélisande Suite; and Mussorgsky arr. Armstrong Pictures at an Exhibition. Admission is free, but donations to the retiring collection are much appreciated. All are welcome.
Save the date of the Spring Concert, which will be on 2 April 2023.

BEL CANTO SINGERS, the well-known 4-part Worcestershire choir, are back to rehearsals at St. John's Church, Greenlands Avenue Redditch B98 7PZ on Monday evenings. They are always happy to welcome new singers. They have a very wide and varied repertoire and a huge catalogue to include pop, fun pieces, musical theatre, jazz, folk music and traditional choral and classical music along with much more. Bel Canto Singers are a friendly and social group, under the guidance of Musical Director, Liz Green and accompanist, Wendy Quirk. They are a non-profit making organisation and select a new charity each year to support both financially and with provision of their services. Just turn up at rehearsal on Mondays at 7.30pm where there will be a wide range of singing activities, light refreshments and chat. More information please contact Secretary Veronica Porter 07885 507899 or visit www.belcantosingers.org.uk

THE GEMINI Choir is seeking new singers. Info from Philip Morris on 07969 741137.

BLACKWELL Concert Band and Training Band is open to all brass and woodwind players of all abilities. To learn more about the band,

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book them, or find details of upcoming events, email blackwellconcertband98@gmail.com or visit www.blackwellconcertband.co.uk

SINGING For Health is an online group aimed specifically at people with health problems, mental or physical. It's fortnightly and completely free – all you need is a printer and a suitable device (laptop, phone etc).

BROMSGROVE Music Centre runs weekly sessions for young brass, wind, and string instrument players to enjoy being part of a group who rehearse and perform together. New members always welcome! Sessions are run by Severn Arts at St John's Middle School, Bromsgrove, on Mondays 5.45–6.45pm. Individual instrumental and vocal lessons are also provided at the centre. For more info and to sign up, see www.severnarts.org.uk/music-centre-groups

BROMSGROVE Folk Club meets on the second and last Thurs every month at Catshill Club, starting at 8pm. For a full list of events call Bob Bignell on 0121 476 5938 or see www.bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

BROMSGROVE Rock Choir offers everyone the chance to sing pop, rock and chart songs – no audition needed. Free taster sessions available. More info at www.rockchoir.com or on 01252 714276.

BROMSGROVE Community Choir meets on Thurs evenings, 6–7 pm at Bromsgrove Methodist Church (main church hall). They sing for fun and enjoyment; everyone welcome, singers or not. Contact Ruth Henley for details on 01527 527022 or 07812 145267, or email r.g.henley@btinternet.com

DANCING

TANGO Argentino Thursdays in Barnt Green. In the Friends Meeting House. For further information: https://www.facebook.com/groups/tango42

AELFGYTHE Border Morris is seeking new dancers (female) and musicians (male or female) to join them for fun, exercise and dancing. They meet at 7.45pm every Weds in Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall. Everyone welcome. Come and play traditional folk music, or try Morris dancing. For more details call Pam on 07961 830 831.

FRENCH & Breton folk dancing meets at Alvechurch Village Hall on the first Sat each month from 2.30–5pm (Covid-dependent, so please check first by emailing alvechurch-frenchdance@gmail.com). Informal tuition and live music provided. New dancers (and musicians) welcome. £2 per session.

SEQUENCE Ballroom and Latin dancing every Mon evening at 8pm at the Longbridge Social Club, 1012 Bristol Road South, Northfield. Occasional free tuition. All welcome to a friendly fun-filled dance. Details from Kalvin on 07725 265024.

ALVECHURCH Morris Men are on the lookout for new dancers and musicians. They practise on Mondays at Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall, 8.30–10pm, followed by a "debrief" at a local hostelry. They dance in local towns and at various local and national events, and perform a world-famous (sort of) mummers play in the village every New Year's Day.
No ability, fitness or co-ordination required – if you are male, 18+ and prepared to spend more time than is probably good for you in public houses, pop along to meet the group! Drop in to any practice, contact Steve on 07375 592928 or email: alvechurchbagman@gmail.com

NANCY Butterfly Morris Dancers dance in the North-West Morris style (clogs!) and practise at Catshill Methodist Church Hall on Monday evenings ready to meet up with other Morris sides for social events and festivals. They are very happy to welcome new adult dancers and musicians. See: www.nancybutterfly.co.uk or Facebook for what they get up to. You can contact them via the website or Jane on 07726 915289.

AVONCROFT Folk Dance Group enjoys anything from barn dances to ones seen in *Pride & Prejudice* or *Poldark*. All welcome, no need to have a partner. The group meets every Thurs from 8–10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. £2.50 incl refreshments. Info from Liz Stanton on 01905 353995 or liz@the-stantons.uk or visit www.avoncroftfdg.weebly.com

BJ's BUSY Boots Line Dancing Classes: Tues 2–3pm Bromsgrove Leisure Centre; 7–10pm Stoke Prior Sports/Country Club. Thurs 1.15–3.30pm Bromsgrove Methodist Church Centre. Social Dance usually 1st Sat in month at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane. It's a fun way to exercise. For more details phone Brenda on 01527 870151.

AMY Greaves School of Dance & Fitness offers a variety of classes for toddler up to adults. Based in Hopwood, Bournville and Longbridge. Contact 07979408997 amygreaves1@hotmail.co.uk www.amygreavesschoolofdance.com

CLUBS, GROUPS & SOCIETIES

BROMSGROVE Men In Sheds is a group for anyone (male or female) who has retired or been made redundant and wants to spend time with like-minded people. The group meets Mon–Thurs, 10am–2pm at Unit 1, Metals & Ores Industrial Estate, Stoke Prior B60 4JZ. You can find more information by calling 01527 570490 or email enquiries@ageukbrwf.org.uk

BARNT GREEN QUAKERS warmly invite everyone to monthly free tea, coffee and chat sessions on Thursday afternoons on 10 November and 8 December from 2 pm to 4pm. Come to the Friends Meeting House in Sandhills Road. Parking is available on site, and there is access for the disabled. We hope that this winter, rather than remaining isolated at home, you will visit us to meet old and new friends for a chat and a (free!) cup of tea or coffee. It does us all good just to get out of our homes for a short time now and then. COVID has meant that creating friendships and making social contacts has become more important to all of us, and the Meeting House is a pleasant, quiet and comfortable place where you can meet other people.
We would like to invite residents to a series of film showings this autumn and winter at Barnt Green Meeting House on Saturday 19 November at 7pm and Sunday 18 December, matinee at 2pm. Admission is free, and tea, coffee and biscuits will be served. There will also be a hearing aid loop connected to a cinema sound system for those hard of hearing.

PLACES OF WELCOME is a growing network of local community groups who provide their neighbourhoods with places where all people can feel safe and where they can connect, belong and contribute.
You can now find one of these hubs in Alvechurch. The network is open in St Laurence Church and The Ark on Wednesdays 10.30am-12pm, however you may find these in many different places such as community centres or libraries, and all are open to everyone and offer friendship and hospitality, free refreshments and local knowledge about the neighbourhood.
Visit www.placesofwelcome.org.uk or email info@placesofwelcome.org.uk

REDDITCH Military History Society usually meets monthly in St Luke's Church Hall (Evesham Road, Redditch, B97 4JX), 7 for 7.30pm. More info from Ron on 01527 545450 or ronnieg33b@hotmail.co.uk

FRIENDS Of Bittell Reservoirs is a group of local people interested in preserving the natural environment of the Site of Special Scientific Interest at Upper Bittell, Lower Bittell and Mill Shrub reservoirs, which are important staging posts for migrant birds and wildlife.
If you have an interest in preserving this unique environment and would like to help in its preservation and maintenance, contact: Charles Deverill on cdjd26@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY runs a regular programme of social events and guided walks, as well as maintaining local footpaths. Upcoming social events include an evening of ukelele music by the Alvechurch Radical String ensemble at 7.30pm on Wednesday 16 November in Alvechurch Village Hall. Admission is £1 for members, £2 for guests including a drink and biscuit.
On Wednesday 14 December the Society will hold their Christmas Curry Night at The Weighbridge at 7pm, this event has limited tickets, and more details will follow. For more and full details, visit www.alvechurchvs.org or contact Chairperson Chris Miall via R.C.Miall@bham.ac.uk AVS is always pleased to welcome new members—contact Martin on 07742 100007 or martinclarke1@btinternet.com

REDDITCH Community Shed is a project that encourages skills, combats loneliness, and provides a sense of worth. The group is now in new premises, and you can find more details at www.redditchcommunityshed.co.uk or on Facebook.

THE MONDAY Fellowship group meets at the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church in Barnt Green at 2.30pm on the second Monday every month; £2 to include tea and biscuits and an interesting talk. Info: Maureen Frowley on 0121 445 0880.

INNER WHEEL Club of Redditch welcomes you to its monthly meetings on 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Southcrest Hotel Redditch. An international Women's Organisation, they enjoy a bit of everything; walks, talks, days & evenings out, and everything in between whilst at the same time helping the community. Contact Anne Robertson for information 07580351361. Or email redditch.innerwheel@gmail.com or visit www.innerwheel.co.uk

BROMSGROVE U3A: No longer in full time work? Activity/interest groups and speaker meetings are happening throughout the month. Check website for details: www.u3asites.org.uk/bromsgrove/home

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Welcomes Refugees is a group of volunteers supporting local refugees who arrived under the government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Relocation Scheme (SVPRS). New volunteers always needed – training and support given. BRWR is open to all, irrespective of political or religious belief. Full details at www.brwr.uk

CATSHILL Carers and Bereavement Back Up Group is a group set up specifically to offer respite, socialising and occasional speakers to carers and bereaved in the area. It meets on the last Tues each month in the coffee bar area of Catshill Methodist Church Centre in Golden Cross Lane from 2.30pm for about 1.5hrs.
All carers and bereaved welcome, as well as those who used to care for someone who has passed away or is now in a care facility. Tea and biscuits/cake provided – no charge. Contact Sheila (0121 445 2813) or Di (0121 445 3595) for details and encouragement.

BROMSGROVE Speakers Club meets at The Barn at The Bell at Belbroughton every other Tues, 7.45–10pm. Everyone who wants to gain confidence in public speaking is welcome, but you must book in advance via www.bromsgrovespeakers.org.uk, which also contains full details of events.

RE-ENGAGE (formerly Contact the Elderly) aims to help isolated elderly people by offering monthly tea parties where they can reconnect or make new friends in their own community. If you know of an elderly person who could benefit, please get in touch on 07539 276054. Guests need to be aged over 75 and living alone, and must be mobile enough to walk to a driver's car with assistance. Find general info at www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk and details of the local group @ContacttheElderlyRedditch on Facebook.

BROMSGROVE Photographic Society is a friendly, active and mutually supportive club for those keen to learn about, or improve, their photographic and digital imaging skills. The growing membership has skills ranging from novice to highly skilled, within wide-ranging subjects.
The club meets on Tues nights, 8-10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. For more info, visit www.bromsgroveps.com or see Facebook and Twitter.

ROTARY Club of Bromsgrove meets every 2nd Tues of the month at Maekong Thai Restaurant, and every 4th Tues at Bromsgrove School, both 7pm for 7.30pm. New members welcome. For more info visit www.bromsgroverotary.org.uk or contact Ron Pearce on 07703 567982.

HEART Of England Speakers is a friendly public speaking club, based in Solihull. It is affiliated to Toastmasters International, and meets on the 1st and 3rd Tues of each month, 7.30—9.30pm, at the Silhillians Sports Club and Events Centre, as well as via Zoom. If you would like to boost your confidence get in touch via www.heartspeakers.org.uk, Instagram @toastmastersheartofengland, or via LinkedIn.

BARNT Green Parish Centre has large and medium sized lounges available for regular hire for some morning and early afternoon sessions each week. Please contact the Parish Administrator on 0121 447 7097.

MIDLAND Ancestors have resumed monthly meetings at Bromsgrove Methodist Centre (19 Stratford Road, Bromsgrove, B60 1AS). More info at: www.bromsgrovebmsgh.co.uk

LICKEY Valley Trefoil Guild, as a branch of the Guide Association, is open to anyone over the age of 18. Make new friends, travel, explore, serve the community and help Guiding and Scouting in your area. The Guild meets at Barnt Green Scout & Guide Centre (off Blackwell Road, Barnt Green, B45 8BT) every second Weds from 2-4pm. For more info call 0121 445 3907 or 0121 445 2813 or visit www.trefoilguild.co.uk

REDDITCH Rotary Club meets Monday lunchtimes at the Abbey Hotel, Hither Green Lane, Redditch, B98 9BE. You would be very welcome to join in. Want to be involved, hear interesting speakers, and serve your community? Want to know more? Contact Peter Williams on 01527 60277.

LICKEY PHAB Club is a social club where people aged 14 and over, with and without disabilities, can come together each week to have fun! It is affiliated to national charity Phab. The club meets every Mon from 7.30–9.30pm at The Trinity Centre, Lickey Parish Hall to have fun, play games, do crafts or just chat – there's also a tuck shop! More info from Louise Boother on 07814 122990 or lickeyphabclub@hotmail.com

BEACON Ladies Club meets at 8pm on alternate Weds evenings at The Hawthorns Social Club, Rednal Hill Lane, Rednal. There is a varied programme of speakers and outings, including occasional visits to the theatre. New members of all ages welcome. £12 annual membership, plus £2 fortnightly. Call Barbara on 0121 445 3456 or Anita on 445 3770.

THE WHEEL community room in Blackwell has daytime, evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire —more info on 0121 445 1425.

THE TRINITY Centre in Lickey has evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire – more info on 0121 445 1425.

BARNT GREEN FRIENDSHIP CLUB meets every 2nd Tues of the month at 2.15pm at the Friends Meeting House, Barnt Green. Visitors £3 to include tea and biscuits. Members 50p. Ladies and gents both welcome. For more details call Rosalind on 0121 445 0598.

THE WORCESTER-BIRMINGHAM & DROITWICH CANALS SOCIETY holds regular monthly meetings in the meeting room behind The Weighbridge Pub, Scarfield Hill, Alvechurch on the first Tuesday of the month. There is usually a guest speaker. Meetings start at 7.45pm. Non-members are always welcome. Free entry. They promote the upkeep of the canals to ensure that the heritage is looked after for all to enjoy and are a registered charity. Find out more: www.wbdcs.org.uk or look on Facebook @wbdcs.org.uk. Please email contact@wbdcs.org.uk for further information.

THE WEDNESDAY CLUB usually meets on the second Weds each month at Alvechurch Cricket Club at 1.30pm, and offers the chance to make new friends, meet old ones and enjoy talks, demos and visits. Info from Janet on 0121 447 7870 or Lis on 0121 445 3895.

COFFEE, Cake and Chat is a place to meet new friends or catch up with old friends (includes a dedicated baby area) on the 4th Friday of each month 10:30am - 12noon at The Wheel, Blackwell. No charge, donations welcome. More info on 0121 445 1425.

BROMSGROVE (1982) PROBUS Club provides regular opportunities for retired professionals and businessmen to meet socially and share common interests. A members' meeting is held at Avoncroft Arts Centre on the 3rd Weds each month, 10am–12noon, including refreshments and a talk by a guest speaker. For more info visit www.bromsgroveprobus.co.uk or contact Jim on 01527 833531 bromsgrove1982probus.weebley.com

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KINGFISHER PROBUS Club of Redditch is recruiting retired and semi-retired men to join them in a friendly environment. They meet every 2nd Thurs of the month at 11.30am at the Court Leet,174 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove B61 7AY, with a short meeting at noon then lunch followed by an interesting talk given by a visiting speaker. Partners/friends welcome to join for walks, trips, golf, skittles and special lunches. Contact Chris Bailey on 01527 835802 for confirmation of date and venue. More info at www.kingfisherprobusredditch.co.uk

LICKEY Hills Local History Society meets monthly at 7.30pm in the Trinity Centre, Old Birmingham Road, Lickey B45 8ES. Annual subscription £15. Non-members £3 per meeting. For more information please email info@lhlhs.org.uk or visit the website: www.lhlhs.org.uk

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Soroptimists meets every 2nd Thurs of the month at Burcot Village Hall. New members welcome – pop to a meeting, email sibrsoroptimist@gmail.com or ring 07812 985927.

ALVECHURCH Historical Society has a planned programme of talks on the first Monday of the month at 7.45pm at The Ark, St Laurence Church, Alvechurch. More details from Anne Humphries on 0121 445 5955. New members welcome.

TARDEBIGGE COMMUNITY Hall for hire: large, bright facility for functions, clubs, societies and all activities. To book call 07763 446902 or email tchbookings@gmail.com

BROMSGROVE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at Bromsgrove Rugby Club. Doors open 7.30pm, speakers begin 7.45pm. Admission free on your first visit; refreshments available. Observing meetings are also held on the first Monday each month – bring your telescopes. More info via www.broms-astro.org.uk, www.facebook.com/bromsastro or emailing info@broms-astro.org.uk

ROTARY CLUB of Lickey Hills meets on Monday evenings, 7.15 for 7.30pm, at Hillscourt Conference Centre (NASUWT headquarters) on Rose Hill (B45 8RS). For details contact Graham Wiseman on 0121 460 1402.

SILVER THREADS, the Alvechurch club, meets on the first Weds each month at 2pm in Alvechurch Village Hall. You'll be sure of a welcome in this friendly atmosphere, where members can chat over a cup of tea. There are regular bingo sessions, and occasional days out. New members welcome. More info from Pat on 0121 447 8630.

WOODRUSH RUGBY Club "Old Dogs" meet at 8pm on the 2nd Thurs in the month at the Clubhouse, Icknield Street, 01564 822878. Open to all former players, social members and old friends for a social chat and the odd reminisce over a glass of beer. Join us: call Mike Betts on 07960 303254 or visit www.woodrushrfc.co.uk or info@woodrushrfc.co.uk

THE MACULAR Society Barnt Green Support Group meets on the last Fri of the month (with some exceptions) at The Parish Centre, behind St Andrew's Church, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green, B45 8NR, 2–4pm. Friendly, self-help group, proving there is more to life than this devastating eye condition. New members always welcome. For more info, ring Wendy on 0121 445 1585 or Alan on 01527 877864.

HOPWOOD VILLAGE Hall is available for hire for parties, groups and gatherings. Please contact Booking Secretary Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668 or visit www.hopwoodvillagehall.co.uk

ALVECHURCH BIODIVERSITY WALKS

Mary Green will be leading more biodiversity walks in the first week of December. Provisional dates are Friday 2 December and Wednesday 7 December: any changes will be on local social media, or you can check with mail@marygreen.plus.com.
We start at 10.30 from outside the Co-op in Alvechurch for a slow walk of about 2 hours looking at local habitats.

SPORT, FITNESS & HEALTH

UPTON WARREN SAILING CLUB sails throughout the year at Aztec (Upton Warren) opposite Webb's Garden Centre, Wychbold. A small, friendly club with both mixed fleet racing and cruising sessions. Most members sail their own boats but there are also club boats available for members to use. See www.uwsc.co.uk to find out more or contact membership@uwsc.co.uk

JOOLISM HIIT CLASSES. Semi-PT resistance training for ladies only in a well-equipped gym in Bromsgrove. For ladies who want toned and strong bodies. Attendance must be pre-booked via julie@joolismfitness.co.uk

WOODRUSH RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB, Icknield Street, Alvechurch, B38 0EL is recruiting: Senior (Men & Ladies) U17 Colts Mini/Junior & Micros. Call 07341 256821 for recruitment or 01564 822878 (Clubhouse) email info@woodushrfc.co.uk or see: www.drushrfc.co.uk Facebook @WoodrushRFC

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY'S WALKS are held at 2pm of the first Sunday of the month unless noted otherwise. For walks starting outside the village, contact the walk leader if you need a lift. Weather conditions occasionally mean that a walk must be cancelled: check with the leaders if necessary. Wear appropriate footwear.
The next walk; "Alvechurch, out and back" will be held on November 6 at 2pm. Led by Ray Yarnell and Norma Divine, they will meet at Tanyard Lane car park B48 7RG and you can contact 07508699672 for more information. The following walk; "Charlie's December Mystery Walk" will be held on December 4 at 2pm, led by Charlie Simmons. Meet at Tanyard Lane car park B48 7RG and contact 0121 445 3447 for more information.

BARNT GREEN FISHING CLUB controls the fishing (both game and coarse) on the Bittell Reservoirs. Interested parties - contact: bgfcmembership@outlook.com or Facebook @Barnt Green Fishing Club.

REDDITCH & Bromsgrove Company of Archers meet April–Sept, Mon 6.30pm and Fri 6.30pm at Meadow Park Football Ground (by Harris Brush Works – outdoors) and Oct–March on Fri 6.30pm at Studley Leisure Centre (indoors). Really friendly no-pressure club. New members always welcome (juniors from 8 years old, seniors from 18 to 80+, seasoned archers or absolute beginners). Beginners' courses run throughout the year or taster sessions by appointment. Further info from rbcoaCoach@gmail.com, rbcoasecretary@gmail.com, or www.redditcharchers.org

REDDITCH Ramblers is a growing, friendly and sociable group offering a full walks programme including walks every Sat and Sun and a midweek walk most weeks. Sun walk is usually 6–9 miles; the Sat walk is more challenging, usually 10–12 miles. Midweek walks vary, sometimes morning walks followed by option of lunch or full day walking.
The Saturday Strollers walk fortnightly (4–5 miles). Newcomers are always welcome and can walk three times with the group before deciding if they want to join. The group also arranges holidays, coach trips and social events throughout the year. Full info at redditch.ramblers@gmail.com or www.redditchramblers.org.uk

PHYSIOTHERAPY-LED Pilates Classes in Cofton Hackett, Barnt Green and Lickey Hills. Mixed ability Daytime and Evening classes available. Mother & Baby classes also run by Women's Health Physiotherapists. Small and welcoming classes aimed to improve balance, muscle tone and posture as well as overall body strength. Contact Elizabeth on 07850 604425 or elizabethalexanderltd@gmail.com or see www.elizabethalexanderphysiotherapy.com

CLUBBERCISE@ Alvechurch: Get sweat and glow! Get ready for exercise in disguise. You'll be dancing yourself happy and sweating until you sparkle, without even realising it. Mondays 7.30–8.30pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

POUND FITNESS@ Alvechurch: Channel your inner rockstar with this full body cardio-jam session. Using Ripstix®, lightly-weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising, POUND transforms drumming into an incredibly effective way of working out. Weds 7.30–8.15pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

RELAXATION & MEDITATION for Everyone. Short, welcoming & inclusive classes with an experienced teacher at The Ark, Alvechurch, and online. An experiential approach to relaxation and meditation for a calm, clear mind and relaxed, balanced outlook. For more information, contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085.

BARNT GREEN Sailing Club offers regular sailing, either racing or casual sailing, in beautiful surroundings at Upper Bittell reservoir. For info contact secretary@bgsc.uk or see www.sailingbarntgreen.com

BRIAR Rose Field Archers is a field archery club based near Bromsgrove. There are two qualified coaches for those interested in taking up the sport. For information contact briarrosefieldarchers@gmail.com

YOGA Really Works: classes on Thurs evenings (term-time only), 7–8pm @Cotteridge Quaker Meeting House, Watford Road. Six-week blocks £45. Slow and mindful rhythmic movement in time with the breath. Accessible venue— classes open to wheelchair uses and less abled persons. Contact George on 07490 781637 or yogareallyworks@outlook.com, see www.yogareallyworks.co.uk or Facebook @ Yogareallyworks

THE RAMBLERS Bromsgrove Group: Guided walking with our group for pleasure, fitness and fun. Full programme of walks / events throughout the year. More info at www.bromsgroveramblers.webs.com or Martin on 01527 857117 or Peter on 01527 558203.

ALVECHURCH WALKING Buddies: join a regular local walk with like-minded people who simply want to go on a local, sedate and friendly walk with no pressure. Well-behaved owners and their dogs are very welcome. The group meets at 10.30am every Thurs. For more info, search for 'alvwb' on Facebook or contact Tony on 07763 468893.

SOCIAL TENNIS takes place at Rubery Community & Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, Rubery B45 9AD on Mondays from 1–3pm. The group would welcome a few more players – just turn up or ring Don on 01527 759 318 for further details.

SARACEN Cycling Club is seeking new members. Men, ladies, beginners, and regular riders are all welcome. The long-established club meets regularly by the Tardebigge Pub on Thurs at 10am and Sun at 9.45am. See www.saracenroadclub.com or call Ivor on 0121 453 2287.

LONGBRIDGE Cycling Club meets weekly on Tues and either Sat or Sun. Ride pace generally at 9-11mph overall average, varied distances. Hotel and hostel weekends away, cycle camping adventures, social outings and much more. All ages, beginners, and seasoned cyclists all welcome. Call or text Deb on 07738 982161, email debweston@aol.com or see www.longbridgecyclingclub.com or Facebook @longbridgecyclingclub

MERCIAN Nordic Walking: come and try a taster session for fun, fitness and friendship. More info at www.merciannordicwalking.co.uk Online fitness and personal training available at www.mercianfitness.co.uk

ALVECHURCH Cricket Club Pavilion is available for hire: weekdays for community groups/clubs/societies, evening functions/private parties. Licensed bar, dance floor, kitchen area and great outdoor space. Enquiries to Stuart Brereton via 07775 714165 or ahcc.bar@gmail.com

PILATES Mat classes and 1:1 (apparatus). Irrespective of age, lifestyle, health and ability, we could all benefit from listening to our bodies: tuning in to our needs, building connections throughout the body, focusing on detail; challenging what is strong, building what is weaker, balancing the body to move away from pain and discomfort towards greater resilience and independence. Steff has 15 years' experience teaching Pilates full time. Book a 1:1 apparatus session (Barnt Green) or a mat class (Rowney Green). Call 07759 590830 or see www.steffaffleck.co.uk

BARNT Green Sports Club (Margesson Drive, Barnt Green, B45 8LR) offers racquet sports in a friendly environment, plus running and cycling groups. Clubhouse with licensed bar. More info from Nick Butcher on 0121 445 1978 or visit www.barntgreensportsclub.co.uk

CATSHILL FC offers youth coaching sessions each Saturday morning at Catshill Middle School, Meadow Road, Catshill, B61 0JW. Boys and girls from Reception age upwards are welcome. Contact Gary on 07462 118920 or see www.catshillfc.co.uk for further info.

BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH Badminton Club welcomes players for social and league play. Playing Sunday evenings 5.40 to 7.40pm. Details from Steve Whittaker 07805 051456.

PILATES with Lottie Newberry: Physiotherapy-led Pilates classes every Mon evening in Barnt Green Baptist Church. All abilities welcome. Contact Lottie on 07968 450673 or lottienewberrypilates@hotmail.com

COMMUNITY Exercise Classes at Alvechurch Baptist Church, run by Bromsgrove council: Active Seniors on Tues 9.30–10.30am. and Zumba Gold on Thurs 1–2pm (each £3.50 per session).
Fully-qualified, insured instructors on hand to help. For more info, call 01527 881289 or visit at www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/things-to-do/active-bromsgrove

YOGA for Every-Body. Friendly & Inclusive classes in Blackwell, Alvechurch and online with an experienced teacher. A slow but powerful approach to yoga, which encourages free, natural alignment of the body, whilst building strength, flexibility and relaxed awareness. Contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903663085.

TAI CHI (Qigong) sessions in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mon 10–11am and Friday 10.30. Qigong is an integration of physical postures, breathing techniques, and focused intentions. More details Nige on 07966 069956 or nige@mindfulmoves.co.uk

FIVE WAYS Old Edwardians' Cricket Club at Ash Lane, Hopwood: Junior, Men's and Women's teams, come and join in! Open to all. Excellent facilities. Everyone welcome. Coaching for juniors on Fri evenings May to Aug. Contact Mark Tovey on 01527 835031.

NEW Ravens (North East Worcestershire Ravens Rugby League Club) is now based at Forshaw Heath Lane, Portway, B94 5LH. Junior training and 'little leaguers' take place on Sun mornings from 10.30am, with open-age and touch on Weds evenings from 7pm. All welcome at this family-orientated club. Contact Gail on 07515 020844 or Jason on 07957 248464 visit www.newravens.net

KINGS Norton Rhinos offers contact and non-contact rugby for children from Reception to Year 12. A safe and friendly introduction to rugby – and plenty of outdoor fun and exercise! Training takes place at KNRFC Ash Lane, Hopwood, on Sundays from 9.30–11.30am. Contact Simon Thompson on 07968 424585 or visit www.knrfc.co.uk

HOPWOOD Ladies Cycling Club meets at Hopwood Playing Field on Tuesdays at 11.30am and Wednesdays at 9.30am. For information, visit www.hopwoodladiescyclingclub.co.uk or phone Sheila Evans on 07779 530017.

MARTIAL ARTS Kickboxing/Karate at The Ark Tuesdays 6.30-7.30. For more information please visit www.forcecombatmartialarts.co.uk

ASSERTIVENESS AND HELPING SKILLS Donington Training runs classes at Alvechurch Village Hall. Easy, enjoyable and effective learning. Wednesdays from 19th January, pay what you think and can afford, any profits go to The Village Hall. For info: http://tinyurl.com/DTcdates or John Talbut (0121) 445 4607.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

BABY Bounce & Rhyme is at Alvechurch Library Mondays 10–10.30am. Sing-a-long to traditional nursery rhymes and action songs.

STORYTIME at Alvechurch Library is on Tuesdays 11–11.30. Silly stories and tall tales for pre-school children to enjoy with parents and carers.

continues overleaf

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DRAMA TOTS classes are at Alvechurch Baptist Church hall every term time Monday and at Bromsgrove Rugby Club, Finstall, term-time Thursdays. Rising Stars classes for 18 months-3 years are at 9.30-10.10am, Bright Stars classes for 3 and 4 year olds are 10.30-11.15am. See www.dramatots.co.uk for more information.

TINY CHURCH (stay and play for under-5s and their carer) meets in Holy Trinity Church, Lickey, each Weds from 11.15am–12.30pm during term times. Games, toys, snacks and stories, and a time to meet together with God. Just pop along, ring 0121 445 1425 or email clive.rushton@btinternet.com

EVERY SCOUT Group in Bromsgrove (which includes Barnt Green, Blackwell, Catshill, Finstall and Lickey as well as the town centre) currently has girls and boys aged 6-18 waiting to join, their numbers restricted by the ratio of adults to young people. A few more adults helping would enable existing leaders to open more Beaver, Cub, Scout and Explorer units allowing more young people to experience Scouting and learn skills for life. If you could spare a few hours each month please contact us on 07539 031740 or visit scoutshw.org.uk

THE NATIONAL CHILDBIRTH TRUST (NCT) runs ever-popular antenatal and postnatal courses to grow your knowledge and your network, allowing you to feel prepared and confident moving into the next chapter of your life.
Discover and learn with other local parents-to-be, make vital connections and life-long friends in your community. Courses are held at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green. Visit www.nct.org.uk/courses-workshops or call 0300 330 0700.

ROWNEY Green Pre-school offers learning through play for children from two years to school age, Tues–Thurs 9am–2pm, term-time only. Call 07522 926286 or see Facebook.

SOLIHULL Baby Massage is at Rowney Green Village Hall on Tuesday's. A relaxed environment for parents and babies to bond through massage. Follow them on social media for more information or visit www.solihullbabymassage.co.uk

FINSTALL Pre-school in Finstall Village Hall, Mon–Thur 9.15am–1pm (term-time only). Led by a qualified teacher. Visits welcome. Call 07903 560787 or email Finstallpreschool@hotmail.com

RHYTHM TIME is a fun, award-winning developmental music classes for the under 5's. Classes in Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Bromsgrove, Redditch and lots more. Contact Vicky 07712 675 697 or visit www.rhythmtime.net

NEW ROAD Parents Support for parents of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans children meets monthly in Bromsgrove. A confidential, voluntary, small support group for parents by parents. Close links with FFLAG. Visit www.newroadparents.org, email newroadparents@gmail.com or get in touch via Facebook @New Road Parents Lgbtqi+ Support Group.

THEATRETRAIN Bromsgrove, performing arts for children 4-18yrs. Saturdays 10.30am-1.30pm. For a half-price trial email bromsgrove@theatretrain.co.uk or call 07766 724834.

GAMES & COMPETITIONS

SHIRLEY & Wythall Chess Club meets at Wythall Community Association in Silver Street, Wythall, B47 6LZ, every Thurs from 7.30pm. The club has four teams playing in competitive leagues. Friendly atmosphere. New players are most welcome, just turn up or contact Barry Knee on 01564 826250

SPADESBOURNE Bridge Club plays at Amphlett Hall, Crown Close, Bromsgrove B61 8DW. Join the group for friendly bridge in a pleasant venue on Thurs evenings, 7pm for a 7.15 start. They aim to finish by 10pm. Table money for visitors is £3. Details from Jan on 01905 772256.

MONDAY Bridge Club at Barnt Green Friends Meeting House would like to welcome a few new members – for more info contact the organiser, Des Clarke, on 0121 453 3034.

FRIDAY Bridge Club meets at Burcot Village Hall every Friday evening. We play friendly, competitive Bridge in comfortable surrounds. We meet at 18:45 for a prompt start at 19:00. Refreshments are provided free of charge. For full details please contact the Secretary Ed Payne on 07950951122 or visit www.bridgewebs.com/friday

BROMSGROVE Bridge Club plays every Tuesday evening from 7.25 to 10.30pm at The Court Leet (a Hungry Horse Pub) 174 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove, B61 7AY.
We are very friendly and welcome guests or potential new members, with or without a partner. The club is affiliated to the English Bridge Union and the Worcestershire Contract Bridge Association. Contact the Secretary, Sally Flood, on 01527 832468 or sallyflood@gmail.com

BROMSGROVE Board Gamers is a friendly group which meets at 7.30pm each Weds at the Ladybird Inn, Aston Fields. More info on Facebook 'Bromsgrove Board Gamers'.

BARNT Green Duplicate Bridge Club meets at St Andrew's Church Hall each Weds afternoon and would like new members – contact Liz on 07538 092296.

ART, CRAFT & LITERATURE

THE WITHYBED POETS are local people who write poetry and share it with each other. You don't have to live in Withybed Green, though most of their meetings are there. They meet regularly every six weeks or so. They like to read to local audiences and some write "poetry on request". For more information, contact mail@marygreen.plus.com

PAINTING & DRAWING If you enjoy painting and drawing, try this friendly community group which meets in the Rubery Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, on Monday mornings, 9am-1pm, catering for all ages and abilities. The facilities are excellent for both indoor and outdoor working depending on personal preference and weather conditions. Tea and coffee is provided. Places are available. For further information telephone: 0121 453 7716 (Fridays).

COMMON THREAD: Bring your knitting, crochet, patchwork, sewing etc. All are welcome. Friendly help and chat. Meets on the last Saturday of each month (apart from Christmas Day, of course!) in The Wheel at St. Catherine's, Blackwell B60 1BN. Please bring your own drink to stay covid safe. Further information from Angela Bevan 0121 477 9924.

THE "CRAFTY Ladies" craft group meets every Monday morning in Alvechurch Library from 10am–1pm, with knitting, crocheting, sewing, quilting etc. More info on 01905 822722.

BURCOT Woodturning Club offers a friendly meeting place for woodturners of all abilities and experience. A varied programme includes demos, talks, hands-on practical evenings and visits to exhibitions. The group meets on the first Thurs each month, 7.15–9.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Visit www.burcotwoodturners.org.uk

ALVECHURCH Library is available to host day and short courses such as card-making or scrapbooking. If you have a skill to teach or share and would like to rent a space, call the Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

AVONCROFT Arts Society at Avoncroft Arts Centre (Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR), runs tutored/ non-tutored classes in Art, Textiles, Ceramics, Embroidery and Dance. Contact AAS on 01527 833829 or avoncroft-arts@btconnect.com

ALVECHURCH Art Group meets at the Baptist Hall (rear of church) every Tues from 1–3.30pm, using all mediums except oil. All welcome, especially beginners. Friendly tuition. Call Paul on 0121 445 5437 or drop in.

ALVECHURCH Library Readers Group meets in the library on the last Tues of the month from 2pm–3.30pm. New members always welcome. And don't forget that you can access online audio and e-books 24/7, free of charge, by downloading the Borrowbox app. Visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/libraries

LICKEY HILLS ART SOCIETY, a friendly bunch of artists and those interested in art, meet at Longbridge Methodist Church, Bristol Road, B45 9TY, on the first Sat each month at 7.30pm. Open to artists and non-artists alike. For more info email Lyn lyndasharp2010@yahoo.com or come along – the members would love to see you.

SEW TOGETHER meets on Tuesday mornings from 9.30am to 12.30pm during term time at the new Cofton Village hall. They meet weekly to sew and socialise.
All abilities are welcome and there are a variety of sewing machines to borrow if required. For more information contact Avril on sew-together64@gmail.com or see Sew Together Cofton Hackett on Facebook.

BARNT GREEN ART CLUB meets at Barnt Green Scout and Guide HQ in Blackwell Road, Barnt Green. Tuesday morning and Tuesday afternoon sessions. Workshops with visiting tutors during each term. There is a waiting list, but enquiries from improvers and intermediate artists welcomed. Jackie: 0121 445 4745.

GARDENS & FLOWERS

BLACKWELL Community Garden in the grounds of St Catherine, Blackwell. Pop along to help water, plant and harvest. Info on 0121 445 1425.

ROWNEY GREEN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY meets at the Village Hall on the second Thursday of each month at 7.15pm. The meeting on the 10th November 2022 will be the Annual General Meeting followed by Cheese and Wine. All members are most welcome on the evening re the election of the Committee. The Society is always looking for new addition to the Committee so if you feel you would like to give it a try please speak to a Committee Member on the evening. For more information please telephone Lindsay Smith on 01527 592874

DODFORD Gardening Club meets on the 2nd Monday each month (except August) usually in Dodford Village Hall at 7.45pm. New members and visitors welcome. More info at www.dodfordgardeningclub.co.uk or call Penny on 07706 153618.

ROWNEY GREEN Flower Club, held at the Hall: You don't have to be a flower arranger to enjoy the friendly company of our members, while watching beautiful flowers being transformed into an amazing arrangement.
There is no flower club in November, but the next meeting will be on Thursday 1st December at Rowney Green Hall at 7.30pm. The demonstrator is Maureen Pitt, who has always delighted us with her arrangements. There will be festive refreshments for our Christmas celebration. For more info contact Felicity on 07812 336263

BROMSGROVE FLOWER CLUB holds regular monthly meetings on the 3rd Thursday of each month except in December when it is the 2nd Thursday. No meeting in January. Meets at 2pm, at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove B601AF.
A yearly membership is available or come as a visitor & dip in & out. Refreshments & then a demonstration of flower arrangements and a raffle and you may be lucky and take one home. Further information on 0121 445 1915.

SOLIHULL & District Orchid Society meets on the 1st Sat each month at St George & St Teresa's Parish Centre, Station Road, Dorridge B39 8EZ. New members and visitors welcome, and members are always willing to offer help or advice. For more information or advice you can call Monica Johnson on 01926 747822 or email at kenneth.johnson99@ntlworld.com. You can also visit www.solihullorchidsociety.co.uk to see more.

HELP & ADVICE

POPPIES' is a monthly bereavement support group — contact Rev Sheri Gidney on 0121 445 1185 for details.

DIVORCED/separated and having trouble seeing your children? Being excluded from their lives? The Association for Shared Parenting has been helping mums and dads in the family court system and problems over contact and residence for over 20 years. Visit www.associationforsharedparenting.org.uk

REPAIR CAFE is for those looking to save their money and fix broken or faulty household items.The Repair Cafe is part of an international network that keeps faulty appliances and clothes out of landfill and offers 'a cuppa' and a slice of cake to visitors while they wait. Visit the Repair Shop on the first Saturday of every month 2-5pm at All Saints Hall, Burcot Lane, B60 1AD. For more info: 07804251731 or repaircafebromsgrove@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY hosts one-to-one Computer Sessions for people wanting to learn the basics. If you need help with emails or advice on surfing online then pop in to arrange for free tuition, provided by volunteers. They can also help with online applications for Blue Badges and bus passes. For more info call The Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

GUIDE DOGS are currently looking for volunteers in the community who could give a couple of hours of their time to regularly help someone locally and living with sight loss, get out and about.
Volunteer sighted guides support the person they are partnered with to feel part of the community.
This could be grabbing a coffee, visiting a local attraction or simply getting some fresh air. No previous experience is necessary, full training will be provided and the role is extremely flexible! For more information email MidlandsMSG@guidedogs.org.uk or visit www.guidedogs.org.uk

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

FINSTALL CROSS WI meets at Finstall Village Hall on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm. For more info see www.finstallcross-wi.wordpress.com or email finstallcrosswi@gmail.com

BEOLEY WI meets on the first Tuesday of each month in Beoley Village Hall at 7.00pm. More info from Joan Lovett on 01527 584047 or email beoleysec@wfedwi.org.uk
They will be hosting a Christmas Craft Fair at Beoley Village Hall on Saturday 19 November between 10am-1pm and admission is free. Homemade tea and cakes will be served.

BENTLEY PAUNCEFOOT WI meets at 7.30pm on the second Tues every month at Bentley Village Hall (B97 5TB). More information from Helen Spence on 01527 822611 or email bentleypauncefootsec@wfedwi.org.uk

BARNT GREEN WI meets at the Baptist Church at 7.30pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month. For more information: Jenny Jellie 07983 865372.

BROMSGROVE BELLES WI meets on the second Monday each month at the Meeting Room at St Godwald's Church at 7.30pm. For more info, contact President Helen Holbeche at helenholbeche@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH WI meets on the second Monday each month in Alvechurch Village Hall, at 7.30pm. For more information email Mariea Clarke clarke.mariea@gmail.com or alvechurchpres@wfedwi.org.uk

LICKEY WI usually meets on the first Tues every month at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall (Trinity Centre), Old Birmingham Road, Lickey. More info from Jenny Ryder on 0121 445 1872, Lickeywi@gmail.com or www.lickeywi.wordpress.com

HILLSIDE AT ALVECHURCH WI meets at 7.45 pm on the first Weds each month at The Ark, Alvechurch. For more info call Pat McDonagh on 0121 628 4121.

BLACKWELL & BURCOT WI meets at Burcot Village Hall on the second Weds each month, at 2pm. For info call President Mrs Barbara Knight on 0121 445 3456.

FINSTALL & COFTON HACKETT WI meets on the first Monday of the month at Finstall Village Hall at 2pm. For more info call President Val Wheeler on 01527 874518.

HOPWOOD WI meets at Hopwood Village Hall on the first Thurs of the month at 7.30pm. For more information call Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668.

ST CATHERINE'S BLACKWELL WI meets on the 4th Wednesday each month at 7.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Contact Sue Barrett for more information on 01527 596092 or susan-barratt222@gmail.com

RUBERY WI meets on the 2nd Weds of the month at 7.30pm at Beacon Church Centre, Whetty Lane, when there are speakers, activities and competitions. The 4th Weds of each month is the craft evening. Non-members are welcome. Anyone can just drop in on either night. Contact Judie1055@yahoo.co.uk 07810765314.

FEATURE IN WHAT'S ON

The deadline for submissions to the next What's On section is November 16.
editor@villageonline.co.uk

Village Sport

The Church light up FA fireworks

Above: Alvechurch FC fans in the west stand celebrate after The Church's early first goal against Worksop.

Excitement is building towards an afternoon of FA Cup fireworks on November 5th after Alvechurch FC stormed into the first round proper for the first time in 49 years.

A dominant show against Worksop Town at home in the last qualifying round saw them notch up a 3-2 victory.

The reward for the club was for the FA Cup first round draw to be screened lived by the BBC from Lye Meadow, where Alvechurch were drawn away against League 1 side Cheltenham.

There is sure to be a large contingent of Alvechurch fans making the relatively short trip down the M5 on November 5th.

The Church have also reached the first round proper of the FA Trophy after a 0-3 away victory against fellow Southern league central side Bedford Town in the 3rd qualifying round.

This won them an away tie on October 29th at Nuneaton Borough, the same side they overcame 4-0 at home in qualifying for the FA Cup at the start of the month.

Nuneaton are currently riding high in the same league as Alvechurch, although The Church have a growing league fixture backlog because of their continued success in the two FA

> Alvechurch into the FA Cup for the first time in 49 years.

competitions. But the fans won't mind the prospect of a league fightback in the future while there are FA heroics to enjoy now.

And they had plenty to cheer watching the side's performance against Worksop. The Church were out of the blocks from the whistle and could have scored from one of the first moves of the game – but it still only took six minutes until the home side, cheered on by packed stands, took the lead.

This calmed everyone's nerves and even as Worksop regrouped for repeated forays towards the Alvechurch goalmouth, it was no surprise to see them constantly rebuffed.

The Church's second goal, deep into stoppage time at the end of the half, was an added bonus and when the homes side scored again three minutes into the second half, it looked like the game was up for the visitors.

The scoreline would have become even worse for them had it not been for their goalkeeper, Sebastian Malkowski, who once played an international match for Poland, and certainly still looked the part in denying Alvechurch a number of further goals.

Worksop hit back with two goals in three minutes to be only one behind with four minutes left on the clock. But Alvechurch managed the added time well and finished off the game calmly.

Next stop Cheltenham – and who knows what's going to happen in the FA Cup.

Above: Alvechurch fans celebrate with players after the final whistle of the victory over Worksop Town. *Picture/* Kieran Durrant Photography.

AFC FIXTURES

League matches unless stated.

October

29th Nuneaton (a) FA Trophy 3.00

NOVEMBER

5th Cheltenham (a) FA Cup 3.00
12th Hitchin Town (a) 3.00
19th Needham Market 3.00 (a)
22nd Bromsgrove Sporting 19.45 (h)
26th Basford United 3.00 (h)

DECEMBER

3rd Rushden & Diamonds (a) 3.00
10th Stourbridge (a) 3.00
17th Coalville Town (h) 3.00
26th Redditch United (h) 3.00

Due to the success in both the FA Cup and FA Trophy, home matches against Micklover, Stratford Town, Ilkeston Town and Rushall Olympic, plus away matches at St Ives Town and Royston Town, are still to be rearranged

Comings and goings

FOLLOWING the departure of goalkeeper Leon Phillips to Stratford Town, the club has welcomed James Behan to Lye Meadow. James has also played for Stratford Town as well as Darlaston.

Influential midfielder Aurio Neto Teixeira has already made a big impression with the Alvechurch fans with his box-to-box performances. Aurio previously gained experience playing for West Bromwich Albion under 18s and 21s

Fellow midfielder Maxwell Ngbeken also has made an impressive start for the club, having signed from Darlaston. Maxwell scored the vital late equaliser against Leiston in the league which saw Alvechurch score twice in the last five minutes to come back from 3-1 down.

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